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HARD CAIN

JAMES M. CAIN

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY HARLAN ELLISON

HARD CAIN:
Sinful Woman, Jealous Woman, and The Root of His Evil

by

James M. Cain

"...one of the most remarkable storytellers in the United States."

—Time

This Gregg Press original collection is a treasure trove of three "lost" novels of James M. Cain, one of the most highly regarded writers in the naturalistic hard-boiled school. It collects, for the first time, Cain's **Sinful Woman** (1947), **Jealous Woman** (1950), and **The Root of His Evil** (1951). Each of these works is a typically gripping Cain story and a prime example of the best in the diamond-hard realistic school of purely American writing. Ruthlessly readable, gritty, streetwise, and almost totally free of the sentimentality that mars the writing of other hard-boiled writers, Cain's trilogy is that rare occurrence, an overlooked, massive addition to an already estimable body of purely American writing. No one who cares about what modern-day mimetic fiction is about can afford to pass by this omnibus volume.

This Gregg Press edition includes a new introduction by **Harlan Ellison**.

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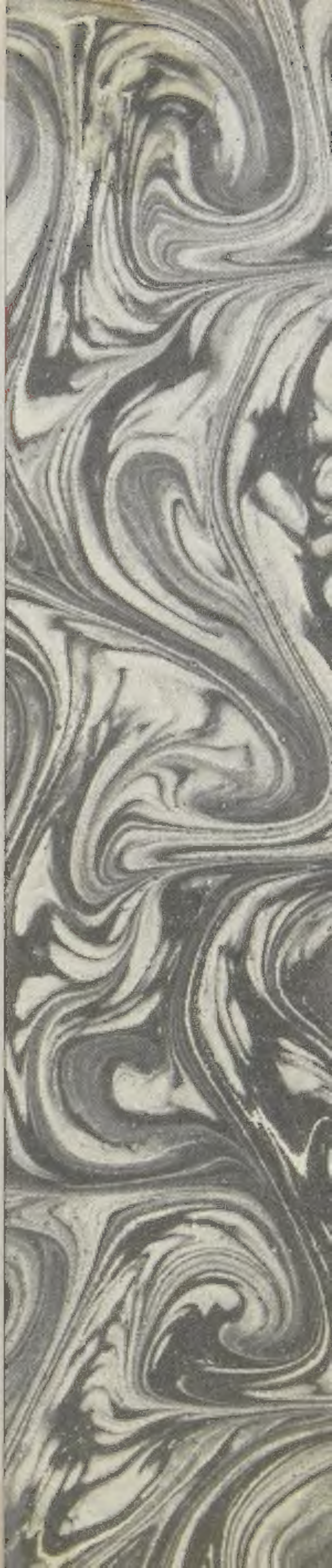

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THE GREGG PRESS MYSTERY SERIES

OTTO PENZLER, Editor

DISCARDED

DECLASSIFIED

Cain, James Mallahan

Hard Cain

Sinful Woman, Jealous Woman, The Root of His Evil

With an introduction by
HARLAN ELLISON

GREGG PRESS

A Division of G. K. Hall & Co., Boston, 1980

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Hard Cain

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Introduction

JIMMY CAIN'S HOUR IS COME AGAIN

From obscurity to blazing fame to obscurity in little over a decade 1934 *The Postman Always Rings Twice* hit print. In 1937 it was the unforgettable *Serenade*. 1941 *Mildred Pierce* 1942. *Love's Lovely Counterfeit* and in 1943 he gave us *Double Indemnity*. In 1944 Paramount made *Double Indemnity* with Billy Wilder as director and Fred MacMurray, Barbara Stanwyck and Edward G. Robinson brought Cain to cinematic life for the millions who already acknowledged him as a contemporary master of literary realism. The following year Joan Crawford won an Oscar in Warner Bros adaptation of Cain's *Mildred Pierce*. And in 1946 John Garfield created one of his most unforgettable roles as the bindlestiff Frank Chambers helplessly manipulated by Lana Turner in MGM's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

In three years James M. Cain became the most famous writer in America. Known to more men and women in the street than Faulkner or Steinbeck or Ford Madox Ford He was the king of the hard-boiled school of naturalistic writing, compared with highest marks to Hemingway, Hammett and Chandler

And then, for no apparent reason, he was gone.

His books weren't gone. They stayed in print And new ones kept coming. . .even better ones than those on which his fame had been built: *Past All Dishonor* (1946), *The Butterfly* (1947), *The Moth* (1948). But his star had waned.

Despite extensive research, I have been unable to discern why or

how this happened. We are not talking here of a one-shot novelist, a Heggen or a Lockridge, with one *Mister Roberts* or one *Raintree County* in him, who gave what he had and then took himself off the scene either through personal weakness or artistic sterility. Nor are we discussing a writer whose vogue was an esoteric one, a writer to be admired by elitists yet beyond the grasp of the masses.

James M. Cain was a people's writer. He wrote muscularly and with compassion about everyday human beings trapped in that dark night of the soul about which Fitzgerald knew so much, and yet so little. He wrote of hash-house waitresses and labor organizers in rented halls, of down-at the heels wanderers and insurance agents who dynamited their prospects into taking policies they didn't need; of emigrant dust bowl farmers driven from their land and brothel inmates whose hearts were not necessarily made of gold. He wrote about all of us when we drop our cloak of respectability to expose the venal—often amoral—predator that waits in the cave of our skin.

His work, at its best, was the personification of what Eric Hoffer meant when he observed, "What monstrosities would walk the streets were some people's faces as unfinished as their minds."

A writer that universal should not have vanished from our midst so quickly. It cannot be that his work was merely toney, momentarily hot, *courant* but ephemeral. One need only pick up, say, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, open it and begin reading.

> *They threw me off the hay truck about noon. I had swung on the night before, down at the border, and as soon as I got up there under the canvas, I went to sleep. I needed plenty of that, after three weeks in Tia Juana, and I was still getting it when they pulled off to one side to let the engine cool. Then they saw a foot sticking out and threw me off. I tried some comical stuff, but all I got was a dead pan, so that gag was out. They gave me a cigarette, though, and I hiked down the road to find something to eat.*

. . .one need only read that opening paragraph, followed by the line "That was when I hit this Twin Oaks Tavern,' to know you're in the magically manipulative hands and mind of a writer who can dim the workaday world around you and carry you whole and

anxious into the ominous reality of guys like you and me named Frank Chambers, women like you named Cora, and poor doomed lov-ing slobs like all of you and me named Nick Papadakis.

By page three of *any* Cain novel, you are so totally *there* that it takes repeated summonses at the top of the voice for your wife, husband, boss or lover to drag you back into the here and now.

That is not the kind of writing, nor the kind of writer, whose worth age can wither, nor custom stale its infinite variety. Yet it happened. Cain vanished and between 1953's *Galatea* and his death at the age of eighty-eight on October 27th, 1977—almost a quarter of a century—there were only four books. Four books that are now almost wholly forgotten.

By the men and the women in the street.

But Cain is not forgotten by those of us who make our precarious living by The Word. It doesn't matter one teeny damn that nowhere in the Hackett & Burke *80 Years of Best Sellers* 1895-1975 does the name of James Mallahan Cain appear, even as footnote. It doesn't matter. For writers like me and Tom Wolfe and Ross MacDonald and Edmund Wilson and Max Lerner and Albert Camus (who took the Cain novels as models in writing *L'Etranger*). Jim Cain was one of the few American novelists who really knew how to get a novel written. His influence on *all* modern writing after 1934 is obvious. Look, here's an example, even if it *ain't* American:

> *Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure. The telegram from the Home* says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. *Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday.*

That's Camus. *The Stranger*. But it's purest Cain. That quality Tom Wolfe extolled as *momentum* in the 1969 collection *Cain X 3*. The rare ability—oh, take my word for it, it's bloody damned rare once-in a while uncommon—to hit that first page at a dead run, snag the reader in the slipstream, and keep going so fast all you get is the Doppler effect of a crack streamliner hurtling past. Not letting loose until the last page has been read, the book has been closed, and several hours have lessened the intensity of what Cain put you through.

We who live or die by The Word know who the masters are. De Maupassant, Dumas, Dickens, Twain, Zola, Traven, Shirley

Jackson, Conrad. We know who the storytellers are. The ones we recommend to the kids in writing workshops, when we want them to forget all that academic obscurantism and simply learn how to plot a cracking good yarn that will deal with what Faulkner called "the study of the human heart in conflict with itself." We tell them to lay aside Nabokov and Hunter Thompson and Joyce Carol Oates—splendiferous though they may be, awesome and singular though they may be—and we tell them not to be gulled by the apologists for the bestselling trash of the Sidney Sheldons, the Jacqueline Susanns, the Harold Robbinses, who justify meretricious writing solely on the basis that "they tell a good story." We tell the young writers seeking models that if they want *stories*, with identifiable human beings in them, to read Prokosch, to read Garcia Marquez, to read Westlake writing as Stark. And we give them James M. Cain.

Their eyes sparkle when they come back to us, with the dogeared paperback of *The Butterfly* or *Double Indemnity*. They *understand*. And they always ask, "What happened to him?"

I have no ready answer. Such a talent should not have been passed over. We should not be living in a time when mention of the name Cain brings a look of bewilderment.

But it happened, and he died in October of 1977 in Hyattsville, Maryland, and his hour had come—an hour best translated in Indonesian as *djam karet*, the hour that stretches—and went, and today the names of Hammet, Chandler, Hemingway are still revered; but Jim Cain is all but forgotten.

Save to those of us who revere not Names, but The Words.

And for me, and for those who worship at that altar, Cain's hour has come again, a little late perhaps, in the reality of this book.

The Postman Always Rings Twice, his first novel, published in 1934, was not Caine's first book. Not even students of his work seem to know that in 1930 he wrote a nonfiction work titled *Our Government*. That was his first go at putting words between covers, and it grew out of eight years (1924-31) working under Walter Lippmann as an editorial writer for the old New York *World*. He was forty-two when he came to the novel as an art-form.

Born in Annapolis, Maryland in1892, James Mallahan Cain was

the son of Professor James William Cain—later to become president of Washington College in Chesterton, Maryland—and Rose Mallahan Cain, an operatic coloratura. (The musical backgrounds of *Career in C Major*—originally titled *Two Can Sing*—and *Serenade* are, consequently, authentic to the last detail.)

Cain, in his youth, wanted to be a singer long before the thought of making a living through writing came to him. But at age seventeen his mother sat him down and told him, in a manner that Cain later indicated left no room for misinterpretation, that he simply didn't have the vocal equipment to get the job done. So he got himself a bachelor of arts degree from Washington College in 1910 at the age of eighteen, and a master's in 1917, after teaching math and English there for four years.

Then he became a reporter for the Baltimore *American* and later, for the Baltimore *Sun*. The burgeoning career as a journalist was interrupted by two years of service with the American Expeditionary Force in World War I during which time he wrote for *The Cross of Lorraine*, the newspaper of the 79th Division that distinguished itself in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, 1918.

He returned to America to become professor of journalism at St. John's College in Annapolis, then worked for H.L. Mencken on *The American Mercury*, and in 1924 went to work for Lippmann at the *World*. For a brief time he was the managing editor of *The New Yorker* but, encouraged by both Mencken and Lippmann, he went to Hollywood as the protégé of the successful New York playwright, Vincent Lawrence (whose screen credits include *Sea of Grass*, *Gentleman Jim*, *Test Pilot* and the 1937 Frank Borzage hit, *History is Made at Night*, starring Boyer and Jean Arthur).

He worked in films for almost seventeen years, but though some biographers of Cain contend he was both artistically and financially successful, the truth nonetheless asserts itself to the contrary. He never wrote the screenplay for one of his own novels. His credits are woebegone, to be charitable about it, no complete filmography seems possible as he was assigned from script to script, working for brief periods, doing "additional dialogue" (as on the John Howard Lawson screenplay for the 1938 Walter Wanger production of *Algiers*), splitting credit on turkeys like *Gypsy Wildcat* (Universal, 1944), and watching writers like Nunnally Johnson and Robert

Bloes getting the assignments to adapt his published works—in the case of the former *Wife, Husband and Friend* (Fox, 1939) derived from *Career in C Major*, in the case of the latter *Slightly Scarlet* (RKO, 1956, from Caine's *Love's Lovely Counterfeit* (See appended, incomplete, filmography.)

During 1946-47 he was deeply involved in organizing Hollywood screenwriters under the aegis of the American Authors Authority, in some ways an early precursor of the present-day Writers Guild of America, the craft guild-cum-union that now protects film and tv writers from the depredations of the Industry that formerly relegated scenarists to the status of highly-paid chattel.

Little is known of this period in Cain's life, though archivists and students of the Cain *oeuvre* would do well to research through an oral history the memories of Cain's long-time agent, H.N. Swanson.

Whatever the circumstances of Cain's unionizing activities (the impact and protracted interest of which run as strong thread through this volume's *The Root of His Evil*), it is not too farfetched to conclude that in some way the futility of his not-inconsiderable efforts daunted his spirit severely.

(Having worked in Hollywood for over eighteen years, having served on the Executive Council of the Writers Guild, having seen at closer hand than I care to admit the wretched working conditions for a serious writer in this Industry, and having myself undergone—if not "blacklisting" surely a malevolent kind of—"whitelisting," it is not even too farfetched for me to surmise that Cain the Labor Organizer caused Cain the Writer to get himself passed-over for many jobs. I have no evidence to support this theory; merely a gut understanding of the ways the Industry protects itself from "trouble-makers." And in those days, before the Guild, it was like the taxi wars, thumped heads, scab writers late night phone calls from mogul to mogul naming the names. Cain may have been an early victim of what shortly thereafter became known as McCarthyism.)

Notwithstanding this surmise, Cain left Hollywood in 1947, remarried for the fourth time, and moved back to Maryland. The next six years produced four books—in a manner of speaking—two of which appear in this volume—about which more in a moment—and then, from 1953 till 1962...nothing.

In 1962 it was *Mignon*, an historical novel laid against the back-

ground of the Red River Expedition to Western Louisiana in 1864, toward the end of the Civil War; in 1965 it was *The Magician's Wife*, a tough contemporary murder story of the traditional Cain genre; in 1975 it was *Rainbow's End*, a thriller that capitalized on the headlines made by the mysterious "D B Cooper" who made the big score, skyjacked a plane, parachuted out over nomansland with millions of bucks and has never been heard from since; and in 1976 it was *The Institute*, his last finished work, a mainstream novel of corporate blackmail, intrigue and—naturally—twisted passion

He was working on his autobiography when the final deadline came.

Eighteen novels in forty-six years.

But only five of them during the final twenty-four years of his life. During the period in the lives of writers who don't burn themselves out quick and young, when—historically—they are at their most eloquent and productive. Five slim reads in just under a quarter of a century. Perhaps it was the history of illness and broken marriages. Perhaps it was the toll taken by years laboring fruitlessly in the vineyards of Hollywood. Perhaps it was the crushing onus of constantly being compared to Hammett, Chandler and Hemingway, a comparison that galled him and bent him all his years, a comparison that has, through the years, resulted in his being devalued by slick observers of the crime mystery genre. Perhaps it was the futility of his attempts to serve the commonweal as a labor organizer. Perhaps it was the death in 1966 of his beloved wife of twenty years, Florence.

Perhaps the pragmatic realism of his writing could not stand up to the self-congratulatory, goody two-shoes smugness of an America that had won the War To End All Wars +1.

And perhaps he simply had the bad luck not to croak at an early age, leaving behind a mystique that would up the value of what he left behind, as did Hammett, Chandler and Hemingway.

Whatever the reason or reasons for his light being dimmed, for the nonce his hour is come again; in this volume

There are some things to say about these three novels. Most of what can be said deals with side-bars and skirts the question of quality. Only a dissembler would try to con the reader into think-

ing these books are top-drawer Cain. Apart from the obvious conclusions one would be forced to draw just from reading these books, common sense would lead one to doubt their pinnacle worth simply from the knowledge that they have never been reprinted since their original paperback appearances in 1947, 1950 and 1951. If they'd been spectacular, they wouldn't now be appearing after Cain's death as "long-lost treasures."

On the other hand...

Mignon, *Rainbow's End*, *The Institute*, *The Magician's Wife*, *Career in C Major* and a number of other Cain works that *are* lollapaloozas have been out-of-print for decades. So maybe common sense isn't all that reliable.

But I will not be disingenuous with you. *Sinful Woman*, *Jealous Woman* and *The Root of His Evil* are Cain with diminished power. Why this should be, again, I cannot say. After all, *Sinful Woman* was published the same year as *The Butterfly*, one of Cain's very best, and just a year after *Past All Dishonor*, which ain't too dusty, either.

There is a small mystery here that I hope some literary or historical detective can solve. But I'll get to that in a moment.

Sinful Woman was first conceived by Cain in the form of a play. He wrote it several times between 1943 and 1946, but could not get it produced. It was originally called *The Forty-Niners*. The original setting was Manhattan, principally in a dinner club called *49*, hence the title. Obviously, Cain was taking as his model either The Stork Club or "21."

When he went to do it in narrative form, he moved it to Reno, which is also the setting for *Jealous Woman* and for a section of *The Root of His Evil*. (Conjecture again: why this fascination with Reno? He was very likely there for a divorce. He had three of them, and the third was from actress Aileen Pringle, whom he married in '44 and left in '45. As he was working in Hollywood at the time, it is logical to assume he took up the necessary six-week residence required by Nevada for what was then termed a "quickie divorce.")

He switched locales, cannibalized Sylvia Shoreham—who bears some small resemblance to the then departing 3rd Mrs. Cain, according to acquaintances of the writer—and parodied some of the Tinsel Town cliches with whom he had worked.

It is in these scenes of parody that the greatest strength of *Sinful*

Woman lies. His portrait of Dimmy Spiro while overblown and caricatured by contemporary standards, and perhaps overfamiliar after forty years of novels about Hollywood and its denizens, is sufficiently raucous and on-the mark to command our attention and delight. I assure you, even today, such men exist in just this form in the film industry.

Notwithstanding the occasional bonecrusher passages of writing and the hit & run scenes where the old, belt 'em in the gut Cain pops up to telling effect, *Sinful Woman* manifests some overly romanticized, very nearly mawkish mannerisms that seem mysteriously un-Cainlike. The "romance" between Sheriff Parker Lucas and superstar Sylvia Shoreham reeks of the worst of the "they met cute" idiom of 40's cornball movie comedies. If one reads the rest of Cain's work, this kind of thing is avoided like a slushy patch on a downhill run. My instincts tell me there may have been another hand at work here. Don't ask me for specifics. . . I just get this *feeling*.

The feeling intensifies when I spot the same damned lapse in *Jealous Woman*. Ed Horner and Jane Delevan go through the same sudden, incongruous scene of looking at each other and one of them saying, "You know I love you," nonsense without proper Cainesque plot-foundation as in the earlier novel.

That simply *ain't* the way Cain did it.

If you don't believe me, look at how he handles boy meets-girl in *The Root of His Evil*. It's outdated by today's standards, sure, but *for the time* it was well-orchestrated and the pacing is sublime

Not so in *Sinful* or *Jealous* When that detective tries to unravel the mystery I'll be getting to in a moment, maybe s he can figure out this one, too.

The Moth, written in 1948, is acknowledged to be the most purely autobiographical of Cain's works. His next effort was *Jealous Woman*, in 1950 It is another divorce novel set in Reno, and may well be a further statement of his life. One small side-bar is of literary note here, though: the character of Keyes, the indefatigable insurance claims investigator who figures so prominently in *Double Indemnity*, reappears in *Jealous Woman*, seven years later. But it's a very changed Keyes. It isn't the ruminative, tough character portrayed on screen by Edward G Robinson. It's a Keyes who looks just the barest foolish, a suited buffoon who gets hustled by Lady

Constance Sperry in a way neither you nor I would permit for thirty seconds.

How odd that Cain would ring in with such a transformed persona, what had been one of his most successful creations.

I have been told that *The Root of His Evil* was made into a film titled *Shameless*, starring Charles Boyer; but I can track down no such listing in any of the many film references I consulted, nor does it appear in listings of Boyer's career credits. Perhaps it's another Cain mystery. What I do know is that the novel was written in 1938, but wasn't published until 1951. It was originally titled *A Modern Cinderella*. The phrase occurs many times in the novel, in reference to the protagonist, Carrie Selden. But here's a mysterious Cain twister for you: in 1956 Warners did a film version of Cain's *Serenade*—written in '37—based on the novel of the same name, directed by Anthony Mann and starring Mario Lanza and Joan Fontaine, screenplay by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts. It was originally a project on which Cain worked for Warners, though he eventually got no screen credit. And he titled his working treatment of the film . . . *A Modern Cinderella*.

I think that detective will have his/her hands full.

(And if that isn't enough to perplex, consider that *Serenade* was remade *within a year*, by Universal as *Interlude*, based on Cain's treatment for *Serenade/A Modern Cinderella*. Go figure it.)

For my taste, *The Root of His Evil* is the best of the three novels in this collection. It has stronger characters, particularly the women; it has a more sweeping scope in terms of contemporary culture of the time, it has more complex motivations; and it has more glaring dumbness in motivation.

The character of Carrie is that special side-of-the-mouth creation that Cain did so abundantly and so well. He was one of the few male writers who seemed to know how tough it was for a working woman who wanted to be independent during that period in American history so thunderously *macho*. His Carrie, for all her ga ga behavior over Grant Harris (who strikes me as a king wimp), is one laudable cookie. Her life story from foundling home to sloop off Puerto Cortez is a fascinating one. It isn't the story of Mildred Pierce, but they're sisters; and if you like Cain you won't feel at all cheated to spend a while with Carrie Selden.

When the editors of the Gregg Press Mystery Series approached me to do an introduction for one of their books, I suggested an omnibus volume of these three neglected Cain titles. They jumped at the idea, especially since so many of even Cain's most devoted readers had never heard of the books. At last it seemed we could put an end to this deplorable condition which had lasted for the past thirty-five years.

When I went to read these books—and if *you* go to find the original Avon paperback editions be prepared to spend about seventy-five bucks for three moldering softcovers that sold for 25¢ each when first released—I was less than delighted with the content. As said, Cain at less than his peak of performance.

But even as I read them the mystery began to manifest itself.

They are hideous little volumes, festooned with sleazy art that scores the bottom of the bucket even for those early days of paperback publishing when Tolstoy and Balzac were published inside covers dominated by sweaty thighs and protuberant nipples. They are the cheapest of the cheap, from a company that was, in those days, trying to keep up with industry leaders through recourse to sex and sensationalism.

And therein lies the mystery.

What was going on in Cain's life at that point, that compelled him to sign for three books with a house like Avon? His name was already made. *Postman, Serenade, Mildred Pierce, Double Indemnity, Love's Lovely Counterfeit*...all had been published to enormous critical and commercial success. The films had placed his name on everyone's tongue. He could, one assumes, have made a deal with a hardcover house for any of these titles, no matter how quickly or ineptly written. His name had marketplace value. At very least he could have made the contracts with Pocket Books, or Bantam, or New American Library. They were the giants in the industry.

But he didn't.

He sold these three titles—and I don't for a moment think Cain chose *Sinful Woman, Jealous Woman* and *The Root of His Evil* as the ones he wanted on his work—to one of the lowest, raunchiest, most exploitative publishers in the game.

Was it fast money? How could it have been: he had been steadily

employed as a scenarist for years? Was it a distaste for the product? Probably not: one book was based on a play over which he'd labored long and hard, and another was a book he'd written when he was on the rise. Was it disenchantment with being labeled a Hemingway-*manqué*, an attempt to "lose" three titles that reinforced that image?

It remains for the detective to solve this one.

What is left are three historically interesting quick-reads by a shamefully overlooked American master. Their publication is at once academically honorable and inherently worthy, simply because there *is* some hard Cain in each of them.

But more, they may serve to whet the appetite of those who may never have read Cain at his best.

If there be any who disparage the resurrection of these less than-splendid novels, I commend to them these words from Budd Schulberg.

"...a writer's career is not an escalator or a ladder or a palm tree to be monkey climbed hand over hand. A writer, if he keeps on writing, is a mountain range. Look at any mountain range. Does it worry because every peak isn't Mount Whitney or that its own Whitney doesn't mount to Everest? No, it says, I am a mountain range, I go up, I go down, I level off, I drop and even fall away, then I pause and rise again, jagged, uneven, under no pressure to produce rise on top of rise on top of rise like a geological stairway to the skies. But when you look at me from one end to the other, I am a mountain range. I thrust my imperfect ranging form up above sea level and throw some sort of shadow against the sky."

For those of us who live and worship The Words, the ranging shadow of James M. Cain looms large; and if what you hold in your hands is neither K-2 nor *Chomolungma*, well then it is an honorable foothill of the preeminence that was James Cain, who taught a great many of us what we needed to know.

HARLAN ELLISON
Los Angeles
3 February 80

NOTE. The author of this introduction wishes to thank the following for their research assistance in the preparation of this material. Mr. Stuart Birnbaum, into whose hands has passed a wealth of Cain memorabilia, for gracious and unstinting response to the author's endless questions; Mr. Bill Warren, of the Motion Picture Academy's reference library, for some considerable time spent rooting about in files locating bits of minutiae, Mr. Dick Lochte of the Los Angeles *Times*, for the answers to some questions, Messrs. Steinbrunner and Penzler, whose *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* was invaluable; and to Ms. Marty Clark, my research assistant, who ran her behind off in service to this piece of writing.

KNOWN FILM CREDITS OF JAMES M. CAIN—he undoubtedly worked on many films for which he received no on-screen credit

She Made Her Bed (Paramount, 1934) Based on Cain's "Baby in the Icebox." Script by Casey Robinson & Frank R. Adams. Director: Ralph Murphy. Leads: Richard Arlen, Sally Eilers, Robert Armstrong

Algiers (1938, Walter Wanger Prods., UA release) Cain did additional dialogue on this. Script: John Howard Lawson; Director: John Cromwell. Leads: Hedy Lamarr, Charles Boyer (as Pepe Le Moko)

Stand Up and Fight (MGM, 1939) Script: Cain, Jane Murfin, Harvey Ferguson; Director: W. S. Van Dyke II; Leads: Wallace Beery, Robert Taylor

Le Dernier Tournant (Lux, 1939) Script: Charles Spaak, Henry Torres; Director: Pierre Chenal; Leads: Fernand Gravet, Michel Simon, Corinne Luchaire. From *The Postman Always Rings Twice* by Cain

When Tomorrow Comes (Universal, 1939) Script: Dwight Taylor, Director-Producer: John M. Stahl. Leads: Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer. From Cain's *A Modern Cinderella* (apparently also called *Serenade*).

Wife, Husband and Friend (Fox, 1939) Script: Nunnally Johnson; Director, Gregory Ratoff. Leads: Warner Baxter, Loretta Young. Based on Cain's *Career in C Major*

Money and the Woman (Warners, 1940) Script, Robert Presnell; Director: William K. Howard; Cast: Jeffrey Lynn, Brenda Marshall. From the novel of the same name by Cain

Ossessione (Cocmor-Marceau, 1942) Script: Mario Alicata, Antonio Pietrangeli, Gianni Puccini, Giuseppe di Santis, Luchino Visconti; Director: Visconti. Leads: Clara Calamai, Massimo Girotti, Juan De Landa. From *The Postman Always Rings Twice* by Cain

The Bridge of San Luis Rey (Benedict Bogeaus, UA, 1944) Script: Howard Estabrook, Cain, Director, Rowland V. Lee. Leads: Lynn Bari, Francis Lederer, Akim Tamiroff.

Gypsy Wildcat (1944, Universal) Script, James Hogan, Gene Lewis, Cain; Director: Roy William Neill. Leads, Maria Montez, Jon Hall. Egad.

Everybody Does It (Fox, 1949) Script & Producer: Nunnally Johnson; Director: Edmund Goulding. Leads: Paul Douglas, Linda Darnell. Based on an unpublished story by Cain

Slightly Scarlet (RKO, 1956) Script: Robert Blees; Director, Allan Dwan. Leads, John Payne, Arlene Dahl, Rhonda Fleming. Based on *Love's Lovely Counterfeit* by Cain.

Serenade (Warners, 1956) Script: Ivan Goff, Ben Roberts, John Twist, Director, Anthony Mann. Leads, Mario Lanza, Joan Fontaine. Based on the novel of the same name (apparently also called *A Modern Cinderella*) by Cain

Interlude (Universal, 1957) Script: Daniel Fuchs, Franklin Coen, Adapted by Inez Cooke from a script by Dwight Taylor which was based on a story by Cain. Director, Douglas Sirk; Producer: Ross Hunter. Leads: June Allyson, Rossano Brazzi. Seems to be based on *Serenade*. *A Modern Cinderella* by Cain. Remade within a year?

And of course, for the record—

Double Indemnity (Paramount, 1944) Script: Billy Wilder & Raymond Chandler. Director: Wilder. Leads: Fred MacMurray, Barbara Stanwyck, Edward G. Robinson. Based on you know what. This was remade as a TV movie of the same name with, I think, Richard Crenna (who did a good job in a misfired project) and ??

Mildred Pierce (Warners, 1945) Script: Ranald MacDougall. Director: Michael Curtiz. Leads: Joan Crawford, Jack Carson, Zachary Scott. From the novel by Cain.

The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946, MGM) Script: Harry Ruskin, Niven Busch. Director: Tay Garnett. Leads: John Garfield, Lana Turner, Cecil Kellaway. From Cain's novel

Hard Cain

SINFUL WOMAN

Chapter One

THE revolving door revolved, and into the bright mountain morning stepped a girl in slacks, a red ribbon around her hair. She was an uncommonly pretty girl, with blond curls showing that glint of gold which cannot be obtained with chemicals, and a skin with high, dappled flush. Yet her good looks went beyond prettiness, and often touched beauty. For the actual moulding of her face was plain, with a wistful, haunting sadness that reflected the soul of every homely girl in the world; but she had a curious trick of seeing far horizons, of smiling at invisible stars that gave her a rapt, exalted expression. In contrast with this, her figure was wholly sinful. It may have been part of the reason, indeed, for the spirituality of her face, for its breath-taking voluptuousness could not be concealed under any sort of clothing, and condemned her, no matter where she went or how, to the role of nude descending perpetual public staircases; thus she moved as though withdrawn into herself, with an abstracted, Godivanian saunter that was aware of nothing nearer than the sky.

She set off at this gait now, but at once noticed the little knot of children across the street, who had stopped playing and begun staring at her the moment she left the hotel.

Smiling at them, she crossed over, shook hands, asked names, and distributed chewing gum from her handbag. Then she recrossed the street and resumed her way.

She had gone only a few steps, however, when she heard her name called, and turned to behold a spectacle as unusual in its way as she was in hers. Estimating conservatively, one would have said there was 6′ 2½″ of man approaching, mounted on 2½″ of bootheel, and mounting 1′ of hat, making a rough, overall height of 7½′ of lumbering, graceful lankiness. But this 7½′ had strange, not to say bizarre aspects. There were the flapping, workworn, cowhide chaparajos, covering long, indeterminate legs; a holster over the right hip, from which protruded the butt of a big pistol; a heavy flannel shirt, featuring 3″ x 2″ blue-and-red checks; and the fawn-colored hat already noted, which was big as well as tall, and probably held 12 gal. Even as this was being swept off in a fine, Rocky Mountain arc, she was staring in unconcealed wonder, and said: "Darling, I see it, but I still don't believe it. Nothing personal, but I just don't think they make them like that any more."

"You mean these chaps?"

"I mean all of it."

"I been breaking a colt, and they save pants. Well, I started out as a packer, and kind of got used to the clothes that kind of work calls for."

"What's a packer?"

"Oh"—with a wave at the snow-capped Sierras in the distance—"he packs stuff up in those mountains. Miners, prospectors, or just plain dudes, they've all got to be packed, or they'll be getting a little hungry along about the second day out."

"And that was your start in life?"

"I owned eight mules before I could vote."

"And now?—No, don't tell me, I see it all, as it were a crystal ball. Now you rope. You rope, with gags. Last year you M.C'd. all the rodeos in the Western Panhandle of Texas, and one in northern Wyoming. And when I get back to California, you want me to get you a part in a Western. Well, here's where it gets good: I'm going to do it. So far as I'm concerned, you've got what it takes. But hold!—a horrible thought enters my mind. You don't sing, do you? You wouldn't yodel Home on the Range? You're not that kind of a cowboy?"

Had she been less concerned with the clothes, she might have noticed his eyes, which were the most arresting, as well as the most Western thing about him. They were a light, china blue, with a look of bland, childish innocence in them, until something troubled him, when they seemed to develop the eerie faculty of seeing right through whatever they focused on. They focused now on his hat, which he was pulling through his fingers in such a way as to cause the silk binding to make a harsh, rasping noise. Then, rather slowly, he spoke: "Miss Shoreham, I'm not no kind of a cowboy. I'm Sheriff of this county, and as I saw by the papers it was your last day in town, I was going to ask you to step over to my office and sign a couple of legal papers. But as it was to be more of a joke than anything else, it won't be necessary, and I'm sorry if I bothered you."

The 7½′ grew to 8′ as he bowed, put on the hat, and strode off in the direction of a group of public buildings down the street. She went as far as the clear mountain stream that boiled its way through the city, then stopped and stood frowning down at the water. Then she turned, walked back

to the hotel, and went in. To the clerk she said: "Can you direct me to the Sheriff's office?"

* * * * * *

Three startled deputies, reading the morning paper, jumped to their feet when she came in, and she spent a minute with them. Like most actresses, she took delight in the commotion she caused, and had a real affection for rough men. Unlike most of them, she had a marvelous memory for names, for she had been a restaurant hostess, and had a mind like a card index. As with the children, she asked names now, smiling a little at the surprise she would cause when, on leaving, she would get all the names straight. Then she asked the Chief Deputy, whose name was Flynn, to announce her to his chief.

The sheriff seemed a little confused as she strode into his private office, and he covered something with a filing basket before taking her proffered hand. The chaps, gun, and hat hung on a tree now, and he had put on a coat. But it was not the change in his appearance which caused her to stop in the middle of her greeting and stare down at the desk. It was something familiar about one corner of the picture under the basket. She pulled it out: it was a large photograph of herself as Edith Cavell, her most celebrated picture role. Lifting the basket, she found other photographs under the big one: snapshots, blownup candid camera studies, one or two items she had never even seen. She said: "Are these the legal papers?"

"They might be."

Picking up a pen, she leaned over on her elbows. "What's your name?"

"Parker Lucas."

She signed the big picture, "To Parker Lucas, the highmindedest Sheriff I know, with best regards, Sylvia Shoreham." Then on the others she wrote. "To P. L. from S. S." It took a minute or two, and when she was done he said, "That was most kind."

But his eyes were still cold and she looked away. After a short silence she said: "And I want to apologize."

"There's nothing you got to apologize for."

"I trifled with the law."

"The law wasn't after you."

"I trifled with a man."

"Men generally get trifled with."

"Nevertheless, I have to apologize. For shooting past a big moment in my life. For not knowing it was a big moment. I think, from these pictures, from something I felt after you left me just now, that I mean a lot to you, more than you'd be willing to admit, except that I'll make you admit it before I get done. And I treated you like—somebody to chatter at for a minute, and then get rid of with some kind of brusheroo that wasn't too much trouble. Most of the time, if you're in pictures, you can't help that. It's just part of the business. But sometimes it's just dumb. That's why I want to apologize."

If his heart had softened, his face gave no sign. He had got up the moment she came in, and she now went over to him, her mouth thick, her eyes glinting in anger. "Listen, you big lug, Sylvia Shoreham doesn't apologize to every county sheriff, you know."

His face lit with a delighted grin. "Don't she?"

"Hello."

"Gee you look sweet."

She gave his necktie a yank that left both ends dangling down his shirt, then deftly retied it so that instead of looking like a double-wrapped breeching, it looked like a necktie. As she did this she gave a startling take-off of his recent remarks: "Ah'm she'ff dishere county. Ah'm root'n-toot'n-shoot'n man. Ah'm old-time pack'n man, bit haids off eight hot rattlers 'fore Ah could vote. Ah'm bad hombre. Cattle rustlers, train robbers, bandicks, varmints, and bums, take notice and *lam out!*"

"It's murder, but keep on. I just love it."

"When did you start collecting Shorehams?"

"Three-four-five years ago, when you first came out. You made quite an impression on me in those days."

"Oh in *those* days."

"Even if I don't like your last pictures."

"Not even Meridian 1212?"

"Specially not Meridian 1212. That cheap, gum-chewing, lolly-gagging telephone operator you were in that picture just made me sick. You know the best picture you ever made?"

"Cavell?"

"The Glory of Edith Cavell was the best picture that ever *was* made, if you ask me. I saw it at least twenty times, and I know it by heart, some of it. And how anybody that could make a picture like that could turn around and make some of this junk you've been in, like Sarong Girl and Love Pirate, and I Took the Low Road and Swing Chum. I don't know, and specially I don't know how you could do it. You called it right just now. You mean plenty to me, or did anyway. And I don't mind telling you, here lately you've been giving me the colic bad."

He wasn't smiling, but had turned solemn, and so in a

moment did she. After a long, grave silence she said: "You believe in pictures, don't you?"

"I believe in the good they can do."

"I'd like you to know I hated those parts just as much as you did. But, I've been working for men that don't believe in anything about pictures but the money they can make out of them, and Sylvia Shoreham in a tight sarong sells tickets. I had to wear that sarong. It was that kind of contract. But now, I'm happy to say, that's all over." Haltingly, she explained a little about her commitments, and the relation they bore to the man who would be her husband for an hour or so longer, or until the court of this state handed down its decree of divorce. "So you see, it's a little more complicated than you think. It's been all mixed up with a marriage, and a contract, and a lot of personal things that got pretty messy, but that you had to do *something* about. That's why today is a pretty important day with me. Everything's been pretty well straightened out, and while the papers will say divorce, it'll really be a little Declaration of Independence, so far as I'm concerned. Sort of a Battle Cry of Freedom. This afternoon Sylvia Shoreham starts a new life."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"So you can keep right on talking."

"I probably said too much already."

"You said what I've been needing terribly to hear. I think you believe in a lot of things that Hollywood never heard of, and that I've got to learn all over again if I'm going to do with my life what I want to do with it. So you can begin exactly where you left off. Tell me more about Cavell. And I promise to listen to every word you say."

Before he could say, however, his phone rang, and the con-

versation indicated an impending visitor. She wigwagged that she was going, but he shook his head. When he hung up he said: "That wasn't anybody but the major. I'm going in the army as soon as I can make my deal, and we generally argue an hour every morning. They'll make me a colonel if I go with the mules, but I'm not keen on remount."

"What do you want?"

"What I want is to fly. I love it. But I'm thirty-two and that's too old, and besides a man ought to do in this war what he can do. Moving stuff in rough country is what I'm good at, so I guess it's the S. O. S."

"Will you have lunch with me?"

"Will a colt eat sugar?"

"I have a sister with me, that's seen me through this ordeal of the divorce. I'd think I want her to meet you. She's younger than I am, and prettier."

"She must be a sight."

"Then, I'll expect you? At the hotel? Around one?"

"At one sharp I'll be there."

They gave each other a long smiling glance, and then she flitted out with the light skip of an actress who has taken a great many exits. She was a patter of feet, a wave of the hand, and a ripple of hair as she went through the outer office; just the same, three names hung in the air as she was gone, and three delighted men looked at each other and said, gee that sure was one swell gal.

Chapter Two

SHE WAS really going to a lawyer's, to await whatever formalities might be indicated on his return from court. But on her way she stopped, to indulge a weakness that had developed during her stay in this city where she was obtaining her divorce: the hazarding of $100 at games of chance before taking up the serious business of the day. The establishment that she entered never closed, its employees working in three shifts of eight hours each, and while it was typical of such places locally, it differed from the great gambling houses of the world, having little of the cold elegance that usually goes with them. Rather it offered gambling along cut-rate lines, and indeed, with the sunlight streaming in, it had some of the petty glitter that one associates with a downtown drug-store. Painted in all sorts of colors, and with all sorts of mirrors in their navels, were whole batteries of slot machines, operating at 5-&-10c limits, and having their licenses framed beneath them; along the walls were electric Keno boards, and in front of them long troughs filled with corn, for keeping score. Wheels of fortune were everywhere, some of them the noisy old-fashioned kind, with a leather finger clicking between the whirling pegs and real money under their numbers; others silent, a revolving light serving all necessary

purposes. Every hour on the hour a functionary circulated with a bucket, into which the clientele dropped the tickets that had been issued them for drinks bought at the bar; a few minutes later there was a drawing, and the holder of the winning number received $5.

Then of course, there were the roulette wheels, faro layouts, poker tables, dicing pits, and other mahogany-and-baize installations for the carriage trade, as well as racing results for all.

Sylvia Shoreham's arrival was an event, even in this preoccupied place, and the proprietor hurried forward to meet her. His name was Tony, and he was a grandson of one of the Italian charcoal burners of the sixties, who settled the Sierras to furnish various cities with their fuel, and then left the horde of descendants who so largely populate that part of the country today. Like most gamblers, he took pride in not looking like a gambler; he wore the habiliments of a prosperous undertaker, and would have been astonished to learn that God doesn't see much difference. His rocky face breaking into a smile, his thick body inclined at a deferential angle, he advanced briskly, counting chips with his own lily-white hands. "Baronessa!"

"Just an hour or two longer, Tony."

"Ah, today is the day?"

"It's being done now, let us hope. Then the Baroness Adlerkreutz becomes plain Sylvia Shoreham again, and only too glad to be back with the vulgar herd."

But before she could accept her chips, an attendant hurried up, a girl with a green baize apron over her stomach, and said: "There was a message for you, Miss Shoreham. The hotel called, and said your husband is in town, and wants you to ring him at this number."

She handed Sylvia a slip and went back to her dice game. Tony said: "Come into my office, Miss Shoreham. You don't look so good. You look like you better sit down quick."

He led her into a redwood-and leather office, seated her, and opened a window. But when he produced a bottle of brandy she waved it away. "No thanks, Tony. I'm not sick or anything. It's just—"

"Bad news, hey?"

"I had no idea he was here."

"He trying to block your divorce?"

"I don't think so. I don't see how he can."

"Maybe wants money."

"I imagine it's nothing but some foolish last-minute stunt to get me to change my mind, and incidentally sign a new contract with that picture company I've been trying to break away from for the past two years. Something silly, but nothing serious. But, I don't want him around! I don't want him around the hotel. I don't want him around my sister. I—"

Tony's eye caught the slip of paper in her hand, and he gave a little *clk* of surprise. "You know that number, Miss Shoreham?"

"No, I don't."

"That's the Galloping Domino."

"Oh, on the road west."

"*My* other place."

"*Your*—What's he doing out there?"

"Looks funny."

They peered at the slip, and he said: "I tell you what we'll do. I've got to go out there anyway, so you come with me, talk to him, see what he wants. Then if it's bad you

stall him and I'll slip back to town. Hazel and I will move you out of the hotel to my house, and you'll be there where nobody can reach you with a subpoena, a camera, or anything at all."

"Oh, dear, I've asked somebody to lunch."

"O. K., my wife'll serve the lunch. And you'll love my little daughter Maxine. She's just about Hazel's age, acts in all our productions here in town, crazy to get in pictures—"

But at this Sylvia's smile became a little glassy: picture people are usually wary of girls crazy to get in pictures. Quickly she said. "I'd just love it, Tony. I've seen Maxine and I think she's the sweetest thing in this town. But—first of all, let's find out what he's up to."

* * * * * *

They drove out the main highway to a place that looked like a cross between a country club and a Kentucky thoroughbred farm. It was a rambling white building surrounded by trees, with a low, shingled roof, green shutters, and brass doorknobs. Inside, it was a replica of the place they had left, except that it was smaller, and a little gaudier, and a little more cut-rate.

As they turned in at the gate, Sylvia pointed to a green car out front, and he drove around back. They entered through a side door that led into Tony's office, which was exactly like the one in town except that it had green leather chairs instead of red. In the door at the other end of the room was a little metal slot, the kind that speakeasies used to have. Tony opened it, peeped out. Sylvia peeped, and her face hardened as she spotted a lone player at one of the blackjack tables, who handled his cards with nonchalance

and chatted flirtatiously with the pretty dealer. Tony looked incredulously at Sylvia. "Not *that* guy?"

"Of course. Why?"

"He's been in every night for a week."

"*Here?* At the Galloping Domino?"

"He's a regular."

The bartender went by with bottles. Opening the door, Tony called him, and he came in. "Jake, that guy over there, the one playing blackjack with Ethel—you know anything about him?"

Jake looked and said: "Sure, he comes in."

"What names does he go by?"

"Search me. He's some kind of a foreigner. He said call him Vic, so that's how we left it."

"What's he do?"

"Fishes most of the time, I think. Took a shack by the river, couple miles up the line. He's got plenty of dough."

"Send him in, Tony."

Jake and Tony went into the casino and Sylvia sat on the edge of the big desk, her face set, her eyes narrow. In a moment a burst of waltz music entered the room, transformed itself into a man, took her hand as though it were a water lily, brushed a kiss upon it, wafted it gently to her knee again, and stood murmuring her name, as though such a vision of loveliness were more than human fortitude could endure. He was a rather large man, but made with such grace that he almost seemed small. About his lean hardness there was something of the cavalry officer; about his small hands and feet something of the ballet master; and about his bright black eyes something of the pimp. But his mouth was poetic, and it throbbed now, like the throat of a robin, as

he kept repeating "Sylvia-Sylvia-Sylvia" in a soft, sibilant whisper.

She looked at him for a time, then lit a cigarette and crossed to one of the leather chairs, sinking back in it and hooking a reflective knee over one arm. Then she said: "Believe it or not, Vicki, I'm a little glad to see you. And my hand has a little tingle spot on it, where it was kissed. Even when I know the whole routine frontwards and backwards, it still does things to me."

"But it is no ruttine! Is from 'ere. Is from 'eart."

"What do you want?"

"To see you, Sylvia! No odder t'ing. To sing one song, to break one glass, to blow one kees, before comes a end!"

"The worst of it is, it could be true."

"Of course is true! I say myself, Vicki, what you do? You sit 'ere! You let time go by. You act like damn full! Tomorrow you lose Sylvia, you no do one t'ing! I jump in car, Sylvia! I drive in one night! I swear you, I live 'Ollywood last night, no stop even buy gas! I see thees place, I coon wet! I coon wet, had to see you Sylvia. I jump out! I stop car 'ere thees place, I jump out, I phone huttel, I—"

"You lying Lithuanian heel, what do you want?"

"O. K., Sylvia, I tell you."

"And not so loud. And not so funny."

"Is all true! I most see you! . . . But why I call up? Was afred! Was afred you live thees place before I find you! I say to myself, I most 'ave thees t'ing—"

"Have *what?*"

"Thees ring!"

She looked down at the ring that was still on her finger, a plain gold band with steel oval on which was cut a coronet. Without a word she slipped it off and handed it to him.

When he had kissed her hand passionately again, she said: "I would have sent it to you. I don't know why I haven't already, except it's one of those things you just don't have a box to fit. But why the phone call, and the fuss, and—"

"I get marrit again, Sylvia."

"You—*what?*"

"Yes. I get marrit today."

She got up, lifted the phone, asked that Tony be paged for her. When he came in she said: "Tony, a bottle of champagne."

"Yes, Miss Shoreham."

"No, Sylvia, I coon permit—"

"Tony, champagne. And be sure it's very expensive champagne. Champagne in every way fit for a bridegroom-elect—"

"Miss Shoreham, don't tell me—"

"Not I, Tony. My husband."

"Ah yes, champagne."

With a deferential bow to Vicki, Tony left the room. Sylvia said: "Does she live here, Vicki? Is that why you took the shack?"

For a long, worried moment he stared at her. She laughed. "You didn't expect to get away with that midnight drive from Hollywood, did you?"

"Who tell you about shock?"

"You really want to know?"

"Yes, plizze."

"The bartender."

"Jeck?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Just now."

"Nobbudy else?"

She laughed again. "No, Vicki, nobody else. So if delicious naughtiness has been enjoyed by all, I don't know a thing and you're perfectly safe."

Tony came in presently, with an icebucket, a bottle with gold foil on it, and two glasses. When the bottle had been well-twirled in the ice, he cut the wire, winked as the cork popped, and poured. At the toast to happy days he backed out, and Sylvia said: "Do you know what I thought, Vicki?"

"Ah, Sylvia! I frigh'n you, yes?"

"I thought it was Phoenix Pictures."

"You mean I—pull treek?"

"Yes you, lovely you."

"Sylvia! Coon do soch t'ing you."

"But, I was ready for you. And that reminds me, Vicki, I'm afraid I have just the teentsy-weentsiest bit of bad news for you."

"Bad news for me?"

"I'm afraid you won't be a producer for Phoenix much longer, marrying actresses Dimmy Spiro wants for the sarong trade. Since Phoenix wouldn't do the right thing by me I did the right thing by it, and picked up a few shares that Dimmy forgot about, enough to give me control. So next week you and Dimmy and me are all out, and Phoenix gets sold to Metro or Warners or whichever company it is that wants to buy it. And all three of us are free, or will be. Isn't that nice?"

Vicki looked as though he had been hit with some singularly horrible nagaika. He winced, closed his eyes, breathed deeply. Then: "Sylvia! Why do you thees to me?"

"Why you do that, and them, and those, to *me*?"

"I do notting to you! Only lahve you!"

"I think you've forgotten that little contract we signed

together, with the extra page in that I swear I never saw until later, the one that gave me to Dimmy for seven years, with no way I could get out of it if he kept on paying me the miserable little salary it allowed me. And that gave you a great big salary as producer of my pictures, although the only thing you had ever produced up to then was girls for Dimmy's parties. Do you remember about that? Do you remember how I begged you for a release from that dreadful contract?"

"Sylvia, why we no make new dill?"

"It's impossible, Vicki."

"We 'ave soch fine, big plan for you—"

"I wouldn't sign with you and Dimmy if you were the last producers on earth. And just so neither one of you try any tricks with the S-S Corporation, that nice little dummy company you got me to organize, I might as well tell you I haven't got that stock I bought, not one share of it. It was bought for Hazel, and it's all in her name, and there's no way Phoenix can be saved, or you and Dimmy can be saved, or I can be made to work for you!"

"Sylvia! You brek me 'eart."

"However, enough of that. Who's the bride?"

"Is girl I met. Nize girl."

"She lives here."

"Lil while only."

"Ah, the divorce question again?"

"Si and so and sa."

"Do I know her?"

"Shoon be surprise."

"... I do?"

"Is Hezzel. Is your seester Hezzel."

Chapter Three

SHE HAD been holding her glass up to the light, watching the bubbles drift up the stem, but now set it down. Then she stared at Vicki as if she were trying to realize what he had said, to sort it into its various implications, to grasp what it meant. He, his face momentarily in repose, his eye everywhere but on her, seemed to have changed a little; the glow had left him, and he suggested still another characteristic of the Middle Europe that had produced him: a capacity for slippery schemes, not prosecuted in offices, where Americans cut throats, but in the boudoirs of women and other haunts of the helpless. His dark good looks were quite sinister under her stare, and he merely shrugged when she burst out: "Vicki, you can't seriously mean what you say?"

"Min? Sure, I min. Hezzel nize girl."

"You must be—gagging or something. You can't go through with it and face what hell will have waiting for you."

"Hell? Can be. Who knows?"

He was distressed but vague, and she stood up, the tears glittering in her eyes. "I don't speak of myself. I suppose it was too much to hope for, that I could get rid of you and Dimmy and Phoenix all in one day. But why did you have

to pick on Hazel? You know she's practically an institutional case right now? You know—"

"Then why you no take her to court?"

"In other words, if she's not herself, then I ought to have put her away. And if she *is* herself, she's perfectly free to marry you, and the stock is yours, and I'm yours, to make sarong pictures as long as Dimmy tells me to—and then *you'll* have her put away."

"But, I *lahve* her, Sylvia! I—"

One pretty fist caught him in the mouth, and its fluttering throb gave way to a tight pursing, as he touched it with his handkerchief to see if it was cut. She began to stride up and down with a slow, feline glide. As she talked, her breath came in deep inhalations and her fingers laced and unlaced: she wasn't a woman giving way to emotion, but like one trying to repress it, and the agony of this effort gave a measure of what she felt. "You -bird of prey. You're no more capable of loving her than of loving me or any woman in your life. To you, none of us mean anything except what you can get out of us, and once you had your big reunion with Dimmy and he showed you how to cash in on the handkissing and the dancing and the title, that was our bad day. And especially a bad day for any girl named Shoreham. I think I'm going back to my trade, Vicki. Waiting on the table is a lot more respectable than working for you and Dimmy."

"Yes is ver' nize work."

"So that's where she's been going."

"You gambol so moch, Sylvia."

"Yes, I've gambled a lot. After I got her out of California, away from the chartreuse and the B-and-B and cointreau you kept filling her up with, she had a crackup and I had

quite a time with her. And then when she wanted to drive up in the mountains, because they made her feel good and helped her get back to normal, I was only too glad to let her do it. I couldn't go with her. They made me feel giddy and light-headed and sick. So, I let her go alone, and to have *something* to do while I was hanging around here, I gambled. I gambled $100 a day, quite a lot, but nothing to what you and Dimmy cheated me out of these two years. And all that time she wasn't driving in the mountains at all. She was meeting you—"

"Sylvia! I see her two-three-four time."

"You've been coming to this place a week, and what places did you go to before that? I know, now, that it was liquor I smelled on her breath, and not cactus candy as she said. Thanks for that, Vicki. You know it's the worst thing in the world for her, but you didn't stop at it, did you? Not if that was the way to keep her coming to that lovely shack of yours."

She continued her restless pacing, seemed to get older as her face took on a desperate, haggard look. He remained motionless, perched on the edge of the big desk, staring unwinkingly at nothing. With wolfhounds at his feet, peasant girls behind him, a banker at one side, trying to collect his money, a dead deer on the other, head hanging limply down, a falcon on his finger and a feather in his cap, he would have made an excellent oil painting of *Europe and How She Got That Way*. He barely moved when she stopped suddenly and said: "This isn't your think-up, Vicki. It's too good and you haven't got the brains. I see Dimmy's fine Hungarian hand in it. Is he here?"

"Dimmy? Can be. I—"

But as though in answer to her question, the door opened

and three men entered. One was short, fat, and pale, and looked oddly like an obese penguin. One was small, thin, and freckled, with unnaturally blond hair and light shifty eyes with no lashes on them. He looked like an albino rat. And one was tall, lithe, and sunburned, with delicately-carved features and luminous eyes, so luminous they suggested the moon-agates that marble players use as shooters. He looked like a horse who aspired to lofty things, such as popcorn instead of oats. All three advanced on Sylvia at a noisy run, their arms outstretched, their mouths forming big grins. She backed off with a snarl. With no apparent sense of embarrassment, the tall man and the freckled reduced speed to a walk, then strolled over to a framed photograph of the Johnson-Jeffries fight, and stood studying it. The third man, the short fat one who looked like a penguin, came to a full stop, and stood looking at Sylvia as though she had cut his heart out and he wished she would give it back. Then he said: "Sylwia! Is me! Is Dimmy!"

"You think I'm blind?"

"But, Sylwia! This is no way to act! Here we come! Make a big surprise for you! Bring fine script! Queen of the Big House—ah Sylwia, you'll love this little B-Girl that goes to prison to save the fellow she loves."

"I can see her now."

"And we have another surprise! Tell, Vicki!"

Vicki, however, kept silent, and in a moment Sylvia sat down, covered her face with her hands. After a while she went outside, stumbled aimlessly around, spied Tony's car, got in it. There, in a moment, tiptoeing up to the window, Tony joined her. "Bad, hey?"

"Worse than I could have dreamed."

"Who are these others?"

"The one in the beret is Dimmy Spiro, head of Phoenix Pictures. The tall one is La Bouche, his production manager. The little one has a last name, I guess, but I don't know what it is. He's called Benny the Nib. He's a check forger that Dimmy brought in as a writer, to do a story for me called Queen of the Big House. And they're up here to—"

She broke off, thought a minute, as though to decide how much she wanted to tell this man anyway, then told him what was brewing in short, jerky sentences. When she mentioned Hazel he whistled, evidently having long since guessed the girl's mental condition. Then he said: "Then it all checks up."

"What checks up?"

"Jake heard a little more. They got in last night, and stayed with your husband in his shack. The idea was, they were to lay low until your divorce was granted, then the girl your husband is to marry—Hazel -would come out and they'd be married. But your husband, he wanted some sort of ring he'd given you, so Hazel could be married with it. He wanted to catch you before you left town, but he hadn't had a phone put in the shack, so he came here. They're pretty sore. They didn't want you to know until it was all over, and they thought the ring could wait."

"Not a Baltic baron's ring. It's his soul."

"They're a funny bunch."

"You're telling me?"

Mr. La Bouche appeared at the back door and asked Tony if he had a shine boy. Tony called, and a Mexican youth came out of the garage at rear. Mr. La Bouche told him to go inside, and step on it. Benny came out and announced that if he had no saddle soap, he needn't come in at all. Mr. Spiro came out, flicking a handkerchief against his soft

leather boots, and inspected the can the boy had by now taken out of his box. It was at this point that Vicki came out, leaned close, and whispered something to Mr. Spiro. When Mr. Spiro nodded, Vicki started around the club, first stopping to lift Sylvia's hand out of the car, press a kiss on it, and put it tenderly back. When he had gone, Sylvia said: "Tony, will you lend me the car?"

"You mean now?"

"I'm going to follow him in. I'm going to follow him straight to wherever he's meeting her. I'm going to stop this horrible thing if it's the last thing I do on earth."

"Well—I guess so."

"Give me the key, quick."

* * * * * *

Following the Baron, however, wasn't quite as simple as it looked. She was only a few yards behind him as he turned out the gate, and for a few hundred yards up the road she held him in view. But then, as she matched his rapidly mounting speed, the needle leaped to 60, to 70, to 80. At 82 she missed a truck, lost her nerve, and pulled back to a sane rate. The green car disappeared around a curve, then vanished altogether. She drove a few moments uncertainly, then leaned forward with evident purpose. Back in town, she drove to a small office building. When she hurried into a lawyer's office on the second floor, and asked for Mr. Daly, the girl at the switchboard seemed mildly annoyed. "Well, he's been expecting you all morning, Miss Shoreham. He's had to break two engagements outside, and I've been trying to reach you."

Mr. Daly, a tall, thin man with sandy hair, was amiable

enough about her tardiness, but when she blurted out that she wanted the divorce stopped he frowned, announced frostily that this was a most unseemly time. Briefly, leaving out psychopathic details, she explained what was afoot. He interrupted disagreeably: "I can't impress on you too strongly the thought that it will be practically impossible to straighten out your affairs, particularly your professional contracts, until you get this divorce. Under the community property laws of California, your husband can—"

"I want this marriage blocked!"

"Why *shouldn't* he marry your sister?"

She didn't answer.

He got up, took his hat, started for the door. His phone rang and he came back. When he hung up he put his hat back on the tree. "Your decree was entered an hour ago."

"Mr. Daly, what can I do?"

"Nothing."

"Can't we phone the marriage license bureau and —"

"They have no authority to refuse your sister a license, if, as I understand it, she's of age. Besides, she can be married anywhere. Why don't you talk to *her?*"

Dismally, Sylvia drove back to the hotel, but there the clerk shook his head. "Your sister went out, I'd say it was over an hour ago, Miss Shoreham. No, she didn't leave any message, or—" He broke off to answer his phone, then held up his hand. "It's for you, Miss Shoreham. Would you like to take it here?"

Trembling, she took the phone, but it wasn't Hazel, it was Tony. "How's it going, Miss Shoreham?"

"Just terribly."

"I just called up to leave word that you needn't bother

about sending the car out or anything. If you'll just leave the keys at the desk I'll have somebody drop by for it."

"Thanks, Tony."

"Oh, and one other thing. That ring."

"Ring? What ring?"

"It's the ring I've seen you wear, the one with a coronet on it. I thought perhaps it's the same one your husband—"

"Yes, it is. What about it?"

"He must have forgotten it, or dropped it, or something. One of the girls picked it up in the office. I'll bring it in—"

"No, no! Listen to me, Tony!"

"Yes, what is it?"

"He won't get married without it. He'll be out after it, and I might still be able to stop them. Say nothing to anybody about it, and don't give it up, even to him. I'll be right out, as fast as your car can take me."

* * * * * *

In the casino of the Galloping Domino a fat little man sat playing roulette with one hand, holding a coffee cup with the other, and extending both feet to a Mexican boy who was just finishing an extensive job of polishing two soft calf boots. Behind him, a tall man and a little man stood admiringly, exclaiming over the acumen of his bets, which had now netted him an agreeable profit. In the office, a girl sat at the redwood desk, fingering a ring that lay on the blotter before her. On the steel oval she noticed tarnish, rubbed it on the virgin blotter. It made marks. Possibly to find a smaller blotter she opened the center drawer, then the righthand drawer. But this she closed quickly, for she had glimpsed something never far out of sight in gambling

houses: the cold, oily sheen of pistol barrels and rifle butts.

Outside, a car with its lights burning turned in at the gate, a girl at the wheel, a man beside her. He jumped out, ran into the casino. She continued around to the side, turned the car so it faced the road, stopped, and waited.

* * * * * *

"All right, Vicki, here's your ring, and I guess you win. What's the deal? A new contract? Sell Dimmy the stock? Do Queen of the Big House? Whatever it is, it's all right, if you'll only promise not to go through with this ghastly thing."

"Is O. K., Sylvia. We mek new contract, big money for you, vary big money. Sell Dimmy a stock, yes, he pay fine price. Pay one twanny five. Is nize, ha? Do Quin a Big 'Ouse. Ah, Sylvia, is fine picture!"

"Just one little thing."

She went over, stood very close, looking him in the eye, and spit in his face. He took out a handkerchief, wiped his cheek, and stood looking at the floor a long time. Several times he started to speak, and couldn't: of all the insults she had offered him in the last hour, this one alone seemed to have reached the quick of his nature. His mouth had just started to throb when there was a light tap, and the door to the casino opened.

Chapter Four

THE GIRL who now entered the room in a stagey green dress was a by-product of Hollywood that gets little attention in print, but that occurs with unhappy frequency in that enormous catch-basin of talent: the feeble residuary legatee of such life as remains in a family after some prodigious child has been born. Rarely on public view, they are to be seen in homes, clubs, and dressing rooms, these pale, futile, carbon-copies of greatness, having no identity of their own, no existence except what they can suck from somebody else. Most of them, however, are happier than the rest of us manage to be, for it is the irony of life that those whom they worship commonly love them to distraction, would do anything for them, try to do everything for them. The real story of many a celebrated actor, if anybody were cruel enough to print it, would turn out to be, not the romance that his fans talk about, or the success he has made in his profession, but his unremitting effort to bring Christmas into the life of some dimwit brother who means more to him than anything else on earth.

How much this girl actually looked like Sylvia it would be impossible to say. Her figure, while not quite the sculptor's dream that Sylvia's was, was quite striking neverthe-

less, and similarly formed. Her hair, whatever its original color, had been bleached to the same shade of blondness as Sylvia's, though it lacked Sylvia's little glint of gold. Her eyes, a medium blue, weren't so far from the gray of Sylvia's. Her features, certainly, bore rather a marked resemblance. Yet, one suspected that actual similarity went no further than it commonly goes between two sisters. What made her look like Sylvia in so startling, in so shocking a way, was the slavish imitation of Sylvia that she indulged in, with every slightest grimace. From her walk, to her facial mannerisms, to the little wistful smile, to the sad look into distant spaces, she was Sylvia, at least in her own imagination, and could never, for one waking moment, be anybody else.

She gave a little exclamation of delight at seeing her sister. "Has Vicki told you, Sylvia?"

"... Yes, Hazel, he has."

"Are you going to forgive me?"

"You haven't done anything to me, darling."

"I wanted to tell you, but I was afraid."

"Vicki has something to tell you."

"No plizze, Sylvia, you tell."

Sylvia's arm went around her, and into her eyes came a queer look, like the look that comes into the eyes of a cat that smells chloroform. In a frightened, throaty whisper she asked what they meant, but it was a long time before Sylvia could answer. Then, miserably, she said: "Vicki's not going to marry you, darling."

"... Why?"

"I asked him not to."

"But *why?*"

"I didn't think it would be good for you."

"You mean my trouble?"

"It wouldn't work out."

"But my trouble is all we ever talk about. He's going to take me to Vienna when the war's over, and there are doctors there that know all about it, and it's going to be a simple matter for me to get cured."

"It might not turn out that way."

"But, Vicki—"

"Isn't really much of a psychiatrist."

Vicki, his mouth throbbing now in a veritable flutter, came over now, murmuring Hazel's name in a frenzy of compassion. He patted her on the head, said: "I never know thees t'ing till Sylvia, today she tell. Todayheute I on'stan all. Is moch better, Hezzel, we do like Sylvia say. All lahve Sylvia, no? All t'ink Sylvia know best?"

For answer Hazel opened her handbag, took out a cigarette. Then she began walking around. In spite of Sylvia's reminders that the doctors had told her not to smoke, she kept snapping the cigarette against her thumbnail, in nervous, ominous taps. Then she moistened her lips, in the way Sylvia moistened them before beginning a big scene. Then she spoke in the quiet, vibrant way that Sylvia spoke when these scenes opened, the way that suggested patience, restraint, all the idealistic things she stood for. She said: "What I want to know is, why did you agree to this? What did she say to you, Vicki, that made you decide to give me up?"

"I merely told him—"

"No, please. Let Vicki talk."

"Say you nuts. Is all."

"It couldn't have been that. You knew that already."

"Din on'stan about thees t'ing."

"And it couldn't have been about the money."

Sylvia looked up, startled, and Vicki seemed to have turned to wood. Hazel went on: "Certainly it was nothing of a business nature. We've talked this over many times, and both agreed that Sylvia would be much better off to stay with Phoenix, and I had agreed to turn the stock over to you as soon as we were married, since I better than anybody else know what's good for her. Was it about business?"

"Can be."

"Vicki, I don't believe you."

She was sad, patient, detached, every inch Cavell rebuking a young nurse who had failed to bring a soldier his canteen of fresh water. After a pause in which she looked out the window with a little compassionate smile, she went on: "There's only one other thing she could have told you . . . Dirt! Dirt! . . . Rotten, filthy dirt!"

This was the celebrated Shoreham change of pace, the pregnant whisper with which Sylvia could get more terrible punch into a scene than most actresses could get with a hundred foot of screaming. Sylvia, who had sat down, started to speak, didn't. She leaned back, closed her eyes. She acted as though she had been through this many times before, and knew there was nothing to do but let Hazel have her head until she ran down, when perhaps she would become manageable. Hazel went on: "Oh yes, there have been men in my life. I'm human. All too human. I didn't think it hurt anybody. That I could have a little romance, a little touch of beauty to look forward to. Little did I dream that my own sister—"

She broke off and stood with face twitching, tears welling into her eyes. This was another Shoreham specialty: a dead-end stop with tears, not with the assistance of a cut and glycerine, but straight into the camera, with real tears glit-

tering in her eyes. After a long look at distant inspirations, Hazel went on: "My own sister. She's been kind, you say. Yes, kind she has been. She feeds me, gives me a bed to sleep in, buys me shining raiment. She buys me silk, and costly furs, and fine motor cars, and little trinkets, to prove she loves me. But I, I have known the joy of giving, too. I have given a life. Little do they realize that I too might like to be an actress. Little do they know that I too crave admiration, that I too might like my name in shining lights from Maine to California, from China to Timbuctoo, from pole to pole and sea to sea and tiny isle to greatest continent. And it might be mine. Who knows? Am I not young? Am I not fair? But no. I renounced my share of the sun that *she* might shine. I gave up what might be mine, that she might have what should be hers. I, God help me, I loved her, and my reward was—this—"

A wrenching monologue that was usually given Sylvia in Reel 5, this was spoken without so much as one motion, standing behind a desk. The usual way to close it out was not to attempt to finish it, or make a great deal of sense out of it, but to give Sylvia's matchless voice its chance as long as the scene would hold, as well as her incredible capacity to speak with no pantomime whatever, then let her do some trivial thing to bring the story back to everyday realities. Hazel again tapped her cigarette, opened the middle drawer, as though looking for a match. She tried to close it, but she was rapidly losing muscular coordination as her break progressed, and it stuck. She pushed against it with her hip, and her dress caught in it. Yielding for a moment to blazing rage, she banged it with her fist, got it closed. Then she opened the righthand drawer.

Sylvia was still sitting with her eyes closed, a look of ter-

rible pain on her face. It was Vicki, who had wandered restlessly around the room, and was now behind Sylvia, who saw what Hazel lifted out of the drawer. With an exclamation he leaped forward, for the gun was leveled straight at Sylvia. Sylvia opened her eyes, didn't move a muscle. She said: "I'll be looking at you, Hazel. Every night."

"No!"

"Yes!"

The crack of the Shoreham voice was followed by a terrible stare. Hazel looked away, as a cat does from a human being, whimpered, lowered the gun. Vicki, who was standing within an inch of her, took it, put it back in the drawer.

Sylvia said: "Damn you, Vicki." Then she got up, went over to the wall behind her, and said: "You'd better go now. Because I don't know how long God will give me strength to stay away from that desk. From what's in that desk. Go. Don't be there when I turn around."

Chapter Five

COMPARED with Sylvia's glowing twenty-five, Dmitri Spiro's age was sallowly middle; compared with her slender curvation, his contours were distressingly blimpish. Yet he was still under forty, and in spite of pallor, fat, and baldness, he gave off something describable as magnetism. Spiro wasn't his name, but it was a fair approximation of his mother's name, she having been Hungarian; his father's Lithuanian name was wholly unsayable and unwritable, at least to Americans, and he had dropped it. He had started life as stable boy on the estates of the late Baron Vladimir Alexis Gustavus Adlerkreutz, near Memel, where his father had charge of the cattle and his mother had charge of the cheese, curds, and butter. Respect for the *Herrschaft* was a prominent feature of the Spiro household, and young Dmitri early learned the deep bow that a peasant must give them, and the correct way to take off his hat to them, and the rigid stance that was required in speaking to them, to be relaxed only in case of critical moisture in the nose, when relief with the back of the hand was permissible. He had one friend, however: the young Vicki Adlerkreutz, son of the baron, and owner of a fine Shetland pony.

After the last war, however, his education was interrupted,

for he returned to Buda-Pest, whence he had been taken as a child, and got work tending horses in one of the circuses there. It wasn't long, however, before he persuaded the management to let him do a comic turn with the clowns.

Comedians are the business men of the theatre; indeed comedy is a business, requiring bookkeepers to keep track of its jokes, its emoluments, and its taxes. After that, his rise in show business was rapid, as was his increase in weight, and acquaintanceship with actresses of the grand, or Viennese style. Soon he had a company, first in Buda-Pest, then in Vienna, a theatre, and a monocle. But then came certain upheavals, and long before Anschluss he left hurriedly, for Paris. There he tried to get started again, but succeeded only in losing such money as he had been able to salvage. He came to Hollywood, and had been there only a few days when he met, at Vine and Selma, his former friend, the young Victor Alexis Olaf Herman Adlerkreutz, now baron in sight of God and all men except Hitler, who had taken his estates. It was the greatest moment of his life when Vicki recognized him, kissed him on both cheeks, dragged him into the Brown Derby, and borrowed $5. For the rest of his day he relaxed, and permitted his head to swim, and inhaled the iridescent beauty of the sunshine at the reflection that he, Dmitri Spiro, a peasant boy, had been thus treated by Adlerkreutz, a baron of Lithuania, with full seignorial rights over the peasant girls of his domain, and no doubt a great many actresses too.

From then on he and Vicki saw each other a great deal, and within a week had taken an apartment together in Beverly Hills. Then the ex-comic, the business man of the theatre, saw the use to which he could put his handsome

friend. A young girl was just coming up in pictures, could be made into a star. She had been, not a waitress as she usually said, but a hostess in a Wilshire Boulevard restaurant that bought time on the air for a little lunch-hour feature called Your Favorite Celebrity. When the regular announcer failed to show up one day, she had taken over the mike, and managed it with such tact, wit, and charm, that overnight she was a celebrity herself. Then she got a part in a picture. So one night at the Mocambo, Dmitri appeared at her table with a sketch he had made of her, and asked her to sign it. It was small, risqué, and good. Laughing, she signed, and the next night he presented his friend, Baron Adlerkreutz. The month after that she made a picture, The Glory of Edith Cavell. The month after that, not quite sure how it happened, she was the Baroness Adlerkreutz, rather pleased at the title, wholly captivated by Vicki, and a little surprised, but not unduly alarmed, to find that somewhere along the way she had signed a lot of contracts.

From then on, Dmitri was successful indeed. Like most of his colleagues from the Danube country, he had a gift for the cute; i.e., for sentimental little situations with a slightly salacious twist, lending themselves to uniforms, peasant bodices, twirling slippers, and czarda music. Sometimes he used the same plot with goona music and South Sea atmosphere, with sarongs instead of bodices; once he switched to swing, with B-girls' dirndles instead of sarongs, and the story became Love Pirate. Anyway he cut it up, it was the same old hotza; it didn't make actresses but it made him; Sylvia slipped, but he grew rich. Now, as he sat here in this Western gambling hall, his appearance implied his career. The soft calfskin boots, now glowing under the Mexican boy's fingers, suggested his present eminence, as well as his

start among the horses. The whipcord riding breeches, fitted to his rotund rear, suggested the movies that now engaged him. The full duellist's shirt, puffed at the throat by a silk handkerchief around his neck, suggested the mokos of Paris. His monocle, as well as his brown silk beret, suggested all the cafes of the world.

He was playing the first four and the first twelve, risking two 25c chips at each spin, and greatly enjoyed Mr. La Bouche's admiration, and Benny's admiration, to say nothing of the admiration of the little blond croupier who was serving the table. He frowned when he saw Vicki come in, but was reassured when the sunny smile broke in his direction, and Vicki rattled something at him in German about 'wir beide,' which seemed to mean that Hazel was with him, and that the scheduled ceremony was not far off. Tony bustled up, told Vicki his ring was in the office, if that was what he came for. Dmitri went back to his game with zest, and paid no more attention to what went on in the forward part of the establishment, even when Mr. La Bouche held up his finger as though he heard something, and the croupier spoke of the backfiring of trucks, and how the road ought to be renamed Artillery Avenue. Presently, Benny said: "There goes Vicki."

"Is she with him?"

"Must be. Tail light's burning."

"She's nuts."

"No law against driving with the lights on if she likes driving with the lights on, is there?"

"No law gegen to be nuts."

Sylvia came into the casino and Dmitri looked at her in surprise, for he hadn't known she was here. She said: "Dimmy, if you want to see that personal appearance con-

tract you'll find it back of Tony's desk. I just signed it—in red ink."

Then she hurried outside, and he watched her uneasily as she stepped into the sunshine. Then, becoming aware of what she had said, he knit his brows in puzzlement, turned to Mr. La Bouche and Benny. But they, with that sixth sense that is a special characteristic of Hollywood, had quietly vanished. The boots were almost done now. Paying the Mexican he got up, walked around the end of the bar, approached the office. Throwing open the door for the majestic entrance that befitted his station in life, he strode into the room. He was well inside before he noticed there was nobody there, and stopped. Then he looked at the desk, which had nothing on it but a blotter, a paper cutter, and an ashtray. He looked out the window, to where Sylvia stood at the river's edge, and took a step or two in that direction, as though he were going to call to her, find out what she had been talking about. Then he gave a low, quavering moan. Then he turned green, and sat down in one of the big leather chairs.

Dreadful, hammering seconds went by before the door opened and Tony came in, faultless in his double-breasted black suit. Dmitri got up, forced a smile, lunged at what was intended for casualness. "Beg poddon, plizze. I'm looking for the proprietor."

"I own this place."

"You, Tony?"

"Tony Rico is my name."

"Spiro mine. President Phoenix Pictures, big Hollywood company. Could I speak to you one minute?"

"What about?"

"I'm in a little trouble."

"What kind of trouble?"

"Telling the truth I don't know. I was not personally here. But nothing serious I give my word honor, epsolutely. Friend of mine, Baron Victor Adlerkreutz, fine fallow, fine family, one finest families in Europe—is hurt."

"In what way?"

"I think—shot."

"And what do you want of me?"

"Listen, Tony; listen, old fallow, listen to me, plizze. I want you to let me get the Baron out from here. I want we get him to a private hospital, get a doctor quick, fix it up what we say, so when the police come, and all those damn reporter, we don't have any mess."

"Afraid I couldn't do that."

"Tony, you don't want no mess either!"

"Your friend's dead."

Tony motioned toward the desk and added: "Or so I think." He glanced at the small mirror he had in his hand, polished it with his handkerchief, went behind the desk and knelt down.

In a moment he stood up and came over to Dmitri, holding up the mirror. "You see anything on that?"

"No."

"Neither do I."

He went to the phone, picked up the receiver, jiggled the bar. Dmitri seemed to come out of the trance that had half enveloped him and jumped for the instrument. Tony stepped aside and motioned him back to his seat. But, Dmitri kept grabbing, until the phone was knocked off the desk and Tony had to let go or have the cord torn out by the roots. He swore hotly at Dmitri, who paid no attention. "Tony! Not yet! Don't call the police till I talk to you!"

"Sorry, this is nothing I can talk about."

"Yes, Tony."

"Listen! I don't know where the hell you come from, but in this state we got laws."

"Tony! Don't you get it? I'm a producer! If this mess comes out, it ruins me, ruins my life, ruins my company, ruins my star!"

"Once more: There's nothing I can do for you!"

"Then do it for Sylvia!"

"You trying to tell me *she* shot him?"

"Who do you think?"

Tony stared incredulously at Dmitri, who seized the chance to pick up the phone, set it on the desk, and clap the receiver in place. At once it rang. He answered. "Hello. No, nobody called. Fell off the desk. Sorry, plizze."

He set the receiver in place, held it with both hands. Sylvia came in, her bravado gone. She sat down. Tony, after looking at her, was no longer incredulous. He went over to her. "We've been having an argument, Miss Shoreham. About something that's happened. I've got no choice. I've got to report it."

"Yes, I know."

"It's none of my affair. But after what's been going on, it don't surprise me any. I want you to hear me say that, Miss Shoreham."

"Thanks, Tony."

"A jury may feel the same way."

"I'm not that far yet."

To Dmitri, a little wearily, Tony said: "You needn't hold on to that phone. There's twenty-two extensions in the place, and I can call from any of them."

Dmitri leaped for him, clamped arms around his neck as

a drowning man might. "Tony, you don't know what I say even. It's not the jury. It's *Hays!* So, jury say O. K., is swell, hey? Is like hell. Hays say, *mess* is *mess* and rub her out. Tony, I got one million pingo-pangoes tied up in this face! One million I swear, for Sugar Hill Sugar, first picture I make all my own money! If this mess comes out, I can't release! It breaks me, breaks my company, breaks Sylvia—"

"It's tough, but I can't—"

"You want money? I'm rich, I—"

"So am I!"

"I buy your place, Tony! How much—"

"It's not for sale!"

"Tony, give me ten minutes! Give me five minutes! I've got my production manager here! He can make it accident! He can make it—"

"Mr. Spiro, maybe you've been in the picture business so long you don't know how the rest of the world is. I'm a gambler. To you, maybe that's a low tout, somebody to be bought. In this state, a gambler is as good as anybody else. He pays most of the taxes, he runs a straight game, he's a leading citizen. And if you think you can—"

"O. K., ruin me. I don't care."

Tony started for the casino, first unwinding Dmitri from his neck and flinging him to the floor. But for a moment, in this straight-shouldered march to rectitude, he hesitated, broke step. It didn't seem possible that Dmitri, prone by the desk, could see. Possibly he heard. At any rate, he rolled over, jumped up. "What is it, Tony? Only say!"

"My little daughter."

"Yes, your little daughter!"

Tony stood like a man of granite. Then, with even more emotion than Dmitri had shown, he went on: "My little

girl Maxine, that's got more talent than any actress that ever lived; that's sent her picture to every scout for every agent in Hollywood, and that not never even got an answer to her letter; my little girl that's crazy to get in pictures—could you make her a star?"

"Tony! Ask something hard, something that will show how I feel for you! If she's not cross-eyed, I make her Garbo! If she *is* cross-eyed—"

"She's not cross-eyed."

* * * * * *

Having leveled one mountain, Dmitri turned to the Everest that sat motionless in the chair.

But to his astonishment Sylvia looked up wearily and said: "Yes, Dimmy, it was an accident."

Chapter Six

THE CLOCK in the hotel lobby crept to 1:05, to 1:10, to 1:20. The tall man in the cow-puncher's hat, who marched up and down, was a stranger to the clientele, the smart women who would get their divorces in a quiet, discreet way, then take their departures noisily, with orchids; and they regarded him somewhat humorously as they made their way to the dining room. There was nothing humorous, however, about the way the clerk regarded him. Sheriffs, in his scheme of things, were problems to be got rid of at once, if not sooner, and at the first inquiry for Miss Shoreham, he had begun paging that lady all over town. After each call he would give a report, with conjectural matter on where it would be advisable to try next. It was during one of these speeches that Inspector Cy Britten, of the city police, strolled up, set his elbows on the desk, and stood listening. Then he smiled in a sad sort of way, and said: "Parker, have you got a date with that picture actress?"

"That would be my business, I figure."

"Are you by any chance taking her to lunch?"

"Are you by any chance bothered about it?"

"No, Parker, not that I know of, though I freely admit that when she sashays up the street every morning I gen-

erally peep out the window of my office and keep on peeping. It's only that your office said you were here, and so it's my duty to inform you that there's been a shooting out at the Galloping Domino, and that it's out past the city limits in the county, and that as a matter of fact a couple of your men have already left for there, and that it's plainly your duty to go."

"And that makes you happy?"

"Well, somebody's got to take this girl to lunch—"

"And it might as well be you, hey?"

"As a matter of the courtesy of the police department, I just thought I'd wait here, and inform her of the unfortunate circumstances that have led to the disappearance of her luncheon pardner, and then, as the least that any gentleman could do, to—"

"You just thought it all wrong."

"I'm willing to bet—"

"This is how it's going to be: I left my car down to my office, not expecting to need it, and now, unfortunately and alas, I got no way to get out to the Domino without I commandeer the first car I can get. So as I see your car sitting out front, I hereby deputize you to do the job. *This* man can inform the young lady."

Driving out, the Sheriff learned more of the details. The call had come first to one of the hospitals, which had sent an ambulance, with interne and orderlies. When the doctor had found the victim was dead, he had called the city police, mistakenly supposing the Domino to be within their authority; they had rung the Sheriff's office, relaying the facts and offering whatever help might be needed. The Chief Deputy, after asking the loan of police photographers, had dispatched his own motorcycle officers, called the Coroner

and police magistrate who also served as marrying justice, and also an undertaker. In addition to their photographers, the city police had sent a brace of uniformed patrolmen, in a patrol car, to put themselves at the disposal of the Sheriff. So that when he and Mr. Britten turned in at the Domino, there was quite an array of official cars and motorcycles, to say nothing of an ambulance and an undertaker's truck.

At the door, a state policeman met them, and after saluting the Sheriff said: "We closed him down, pending and until. Such a mob jammed in here as soon as the radio give it out, on account of this picture actress, that—"

"On account of *who?*"

"Sylvia Shoreham. It's her husband that got it, and from the way they've been piling in here you'd think—" He broke off, marched out to the gate, and held up his hand to a car full of boys that was turning in. "Just keep right on. Keep right on and don't stop. This is not no cow-roping contest. I said beat it."

The boys drove off, and the officer led the way inside. To the Sheriff, Mr. Britten said: "Lucky, wasn't it, that I didn't stick around to take the young lady to lunch?"

"Was, kind of."

"Things generally turn out right."

Inside, a white, tight-lipped Tony awaited them, and took them into the office where the police, Mr. Flynn and one other deputy, the Coroner, an undertaker, a doctor in white uniform, and two orderlies crowded back against the wall while two photographers took pictures. The late Baron Adlerkreutz was not lying as he had been a short time before, when he was an unseen presence behind the desk while Dmitri and Tony had their desperate argument. Now he lay in the middle of the floor, beside a few crimson drops on the

linoleum carpet, the gun at his side, a tan silk handkerchief knotted in the trigger, and a white silk handkerchief knotted in the tan silk handkerchief, and fastened around his leg. Near him, and seeming to enclose him, were two ashtrays, two chairs, and the water cooler, on top of which was an electric fan. The Sheriff walked over, bent down, and peered. To Mr. Flynn, the Chief Deputy, who walked over close, he mumbled: "What's the idea of the handkerchiefs?"

"That's what we're going to find out. They'd been having some kind of an argument about a picture scene."

"Who was having the argument?"

"The picture men. He was a producer."

"They here?"

"In the bar."

"Bring them in."

"If you'll take a tip from me, you'll talk to them where they are. Two of them are all right, but one of them, the one that seems to be boss, he didn't do so good in presence of the body. He kind of cracked up, He—"

"O. K."

Motioning Tony, Mr. Britten, the Coroner, the undertaker, the doctor, police and deputies to follow him, the Sheriff led the way into the bar, now deserted except for Mr. La Bouche, Benny, and Dmitri, who sat huddled at a table, and an officer who sat reading a paper. Mr. La Bouche jumped up and began arranging chairs, to be assisted at once by Benny; But Dmitri sat where he was, huddled in the posture of a man having a chill, and watching in some sort of oblique way, as though his nose were a side-vision mirror in which he could see what was going on. Tony made brief introductions, sat down, looked at his finger nails a moment, then said: "All right. Get going."

Dmitri drew a long, trembling breath. He said: "Sharf, Excellenz, I hope you don't take it personal I feel so upset."

"Not at all, pardner. Now shoot."

"Yes, quite so. We came here last night, me, my production manager, Mr. La Bouche, and my special writer, Mr. Benny Zitt."

"These guys?"

"Yes."

"Go on."

"We came to talk about a moving picture. You heard of me, yes? I'm Dmitri Spiro, president Phoenix Pictures, strictly class product, make only the best. We came to see our star, Miss Sylvia Shoreham, and talk about a picture. She was to get a divorce today, it meant a new start. Vicki was her husband, but all are good friends, fine friends—friendly friends."

"Get to the shooting."

"We talked about the picture, and there was one scene Miss Shoreham, she didn't like. She is girl in prison, and had to shoot another girl, and didn't like. She said, Dimmy, is impossible. She said, Dimmy, my public will not let me do this thing. Then she walked by the river to cool off."

"Was it hot?"

"She was sore."

"What then?"

"So then Benny, he had an idea. He said, Mr. Spiro, she shoots the other girl, but it's accident! She finds the gun, she hides the gun, she puts the gun under the bed, but has no bad conscience gegen other girl. But the other girl sees the gun, gets the wrong idea. So they *straggle!* The straggle like in Destry Rides Again, only better. Then the gun goes off. It's accident, but who'll believe it? But, Vicki, the Baron

Adlerkreutz, he said, 'Yes, Dimmy, but out in the audience, how do we know it's accident?' Then Mr. La Bouche here, he said: 'I show you, Vicki. It is so simple, you laugh. But wait a minute, I have to have a gun, or you won't believe it.' So we go to Tony, ask plizze may we borrow gun?"

The Sheriff looked at Tony, who licked his lips and said: "I keep seven guns out here, on account of our heavy stock of cash, four rifles and three pistols, all registered to me and all under permits I got on file. I didn't want to lend them any gun. I don't want to lend anybody a gun ever. But they were friends of Miss Shoreham's, and she'd been such a good customer and all, and they acted like it was important, so I took out the clip and handed over the automatic I keep in the desk."

"If you took out the clip—"

"I must have forgot the shell in the barrel."

"Pretty careless you're getting."

"Sheriff, if Mr. Spiro feels upset, I feel it double, because I ought never to have lent the gun in the first place. I thought I threw the ejector and snapped the trigger, that's all I can say; but a wholesaler's man was waiting for me out back and—"

The Sheriff nodded at Dmitri, who went on: "And so, Bushy, he showed Vicki how we can do the scene, so Sylvia will love it. He say 'Vicki, girls fight till dresses are torn to rags, and maybe Sylwia don't look good in a scene where her dress is all torn off. So one piece of the dress, one piece of the other girl's dress, catches in the gun—the trigger. We cut in, show the dress caught in the trigger, but the girls don't see it. So, Sylvia almost has the gun. She twists the gun from the other girl's hand, but oh!—oh!—oh!—oh! People see the piece of the torn dress pull tighter, tighter, tighter—and

boom! The gun goes off, and there is the other girl dead on the floor. So we tie one henadkerchief to Vicki's leg, one to the gun tryger, tie the henadkerchiefs together. Vicki takes the gun, I grab it, twist his hand. Bushy, he stands by the camera, which was an electric fan on the water cooler. Bushy, he say, 'come around slow now, so it's in close to the camera.' So we come around slow, handkerchiefs tighten, Vicki say, 'Ah yes, I see now, is very good, yes, yes—come up very slow'—and *boom!* There was Vicki on the floor, and I can't believe it. I say 'Vicki, Vicki, speak to me.' I say—"

"O. K."

The Sheriff, who had evidently found this recital a little difficult to keep up with, knit his brows and in a moment said to Mr. La Bouche: "I didn't see any signs of a fight."

"What fight?"

"Well—?"

"Oh, they didn't do the fight, if that's what you mean. We allowed for that. A fight, it's like jungle stuff, it's a cutter's job anyway. You shoot five hundred feet, or whatever you need, and he puts it together. All that mattered was the torn dress and the gun. So we laid it out how that would break. We figured the cell would be nine feet long, five feet wide, with two out for the bunk. So we marked the set with the ashtrays and chairs, set up the camera over the water cooler, and started her going. I mean, it was an electric fan. The henadkerchiefs were the torn dress."

The Sheriff asked a number of questions of the doctor, checked the routine work that had been done by his men and Mr. Britten's, asked the Coroner if there were questions he wanted to ask. The Coroner wanted more information from the young interne, and was pretty exact about rigor mortis, the extent of internal bleeding, and such things. He

said he thought he would be ready for the inquest tonight, if the autopsy showed nothing to extend the inquiry. The Sheriff nodded to the undertaker. "O. K., you can move him. Hold him for autopsy and the police will instruct you. You can open any time, Tony."

* * * * * *

Departure of the body cleared out quite a lot of vehicles out front, to say nothing of many uniforms inside. It gave Tony a chance to set his office to rights, and the undertaker's truck was hardly out the gate before he had charwomen at work in there, and was busy himself, setting things in order. When the room was restored to its former condition the Sheriff asked: "Is Miss Shoreham here?"

"I had the maid take her to the ladies' room."

"Will you ask her to step in?"

"Right away, Sheriff."

Her astonishment, when she saw him, was complete. He went over, took her hand, and led her to a chair. "You have a time remembering I'm sheriff of this county, don't you?"

"All I saw was police."

"They help. But it's my case."

"I'm sorry about the lunch."

"I too. I was there waiting."

"I kept thinking about it, believe it or not."

She had let her hand stay in his, and now leaned her head against his arm with the trust of a weary child. "I guess I just wanted to be with somebody that loves me."

"You think I love you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, you're right."

He sat on the arm of her chair, and put his arm around her, and she caught it in her hand and held it close, and cradled her head against his coat. They sat that way a long time. Then he said: "What happened?"

"I don't know what happened. I was over by the stream, and I haven't got it straight what they tried to tell me. They were rehearsing some kind of scene."

"They said you didn't like it."

"It wasn't that. It was them."

"I kind of wondered about that part."

"It didn't make any difference how they did it, I wasn't going to do the picture or have any more to do with them. They could just have well—never started their rehearsing."

She began to cry, and he knelt beside her and wiped her eyes with his big bandanna, and blew her nose.

Then he got up, went to the window, stood for a long time looking over toward the mountain stream. When he spoke it was with the utmost casualness:

"Who killed this man?"

She stopped crying suddenly, and he turned around and looked at her. Then she said: "I did."

"Why?"

She started to talk, and rehearsed the events of the morning. At the end she said: "I'm not ashamed of what I did, though I'm not proud of it. I love my sister more than I love anybody. She's not responsible, and what he was about to do, what he would have done, was a shocking, horrible thing. I feel I did right. It was the only way out that I could see."

"What did your sister say about it?"

"I don't know if she knows it yet. I suppose she must, but I haven't heard from her. While we were talking, Vicki

thought I might go out there, where she was parked just outside the door here, and get her to come with me, and take her away from him. Or, I guess that's what was in his mind Anyway, he went to the door and told her to drive in and he'd meet her at the hotel, and she went."

"Why did Spiro make it accident?"

"Hays office."

"That's right. I forgot."

"If I get smeared, Spiro can't release Sugar Hill Sugar. It cost him a million, and if it stays in the can he's ruined."

"Now, I get it."

Presently he asked, "And why did *you* make it accident? They couldn't lie to me, if you didn't back them up."

"My sister."

"I don't understand you."

"My sister loved this man, and I love her. There is nothing I won't do to prevent her from ever finding out what I did. Don't try to use what I've told you against me. I want you to know the truth, but if you try to convict me, I shall say I never told you any such thing, and they'll believe me. I'm not one of the leading actresses of the world for nothing."

"Will they believe *her?*"

"She knows nothing to tell."

"Do you remember the ending of that picture, The Glory of Edith Cavell? Where Cavell marched to the wall for something that was done by somebody else?"

"Vaguely. Why?"

"I remember it very well. When she was before that court, telling her story, she looked a lot like you looked just now. You remember the court didn't believe her?"

"I never saw the court scene."

"You—*what?*"

"Except for the shots I was in, the whole courtroom sequence was done in retakes and I never saw them."

"The court didn't believe her, but shot her just the same to bust up her organization. She didn't know it, but the man she was trying to save, the one that was more important than she was, was already dead. So the court shot her, knowing she hadn't done what they were trying her for. The chief judge of the court hated it, and that was the most awful scene I ever saw in a movie, where you and him were facing each other there. He looked like he loved you as much as I do. It's funny you don't remember that."

"It begins to come back to me."

"I thought it would."

He considered, said: "I'm taking you back to your hotel, and for the time being I'm not putting you under arrest, and I'm not putting you under guard. I could, but I'm holding everything in this case till I talk to your sister."

"Now, I'll tell you something. I love you, and I think you're the only man I've ever loved. Don't forget that, judge."

"I won't. I'll take you back to town."

* * * * * *

They rode with him in Mr. Britten's car. At the hotel, Mr. Britten suggested they enter through the kitchen and go up in the service elevator, as such a crowd of reporters, photographers, fans, and cops were visible inside, evidently waiting for her, that they might have trouble getting through. But when the Sheriff went up with her to her suite they found it empty. Sylvia, leaving him in the sitting room,

went to her bedroom to phone the desk, and when she came back she looked frightened. "She's not here."

"Where is she?"

"She didn't come back here."

"Did you send her back to California?"

"No, I didn't."

"Then don't worry, we'll find her."

He went down in the service elevator again, climbed into the car. But when Mr. Britten learned of the dragnet that must now be put out to find the missing girl, he gave an exclamation. "I knew there was something funny about this. And that girl, I heard about her when I began talking to the gamblers, but they didn't have a word to say about her."

"She's daft."

"She's— What?"

"Not all there in the head. I doubt if they even saw her. From what Shoreham said to me, she just follows along, and waits in the car, and does what she's told, and nobody pays any attention to her. Just the same, she's driving around somewhere. I want her brought in, and Shoreham does."

"Did it strike you they were covering up?"

"In what way?"

"It all checks up, I guess, or will when we get our lab reports in. And it was just about the kind of cock-eyed thing that does happen. But, I had the feeling that every time I turned my back they were looking at each other."

"Did you figure on suicide?"

"Yes, I did. There were powder burns, and that put it within the ten-inch rule. And, I always said, if cops have made it a rule they won't consider suicide from firearms unless there are powder burns, they ought always to consider suicide as a possibility when there *are* powder burns.

And she got that divorce, and she's a good-looking girl, and maybe he was stuck on her, and maybe he was tired of living. But why would they go to all that trouble to cover up?"

"Account of her, maybe."

"They're taking one awful chance."

"She's worth big dough to them. And maybe she's a little daft too. Maybe she's the kind that would go and join the Lithuanian Red Cross or something, so he didn't die in vain."

"You breaking it open?"

"I don't know. We got to find that girl."

Chapter Seven

MR. GEORGE M. LAYTON, of the Southwest General Insurance Corporation of North America, sat in his mid-town office planning his afternoon, his manner suggesting the jut-jawed determination that a field marshal might show, counting his reserve of tanks. He proposed to call on six newly-arrived divorce seekers, named in the newspaper clippings that lay on his desk, and sell them, or try to sell them, Southwest General policies. This was something he did every day, but it wasn't something to be approached perfunctorily, as just one more job of salesmanship. It involved, as he often told the luncheon club, of which he was a member, the most careful sort of planning, the most rigid attention to the probable peculiarities of the prospect, and even due regard for special conditions, such as weather. So he sat at his desk, a compact, red-haired, freckle-faced bundle of aggressiveness, dictating memoranda to Miss Jennifer, his secretary: the notes that would not only assist him in his sales talk, but form the basis of the "presentation" that Miss Jennifer would prepare, bind in imitation leather, and stamp with the prospect's name, as the give-away for the second visit. He frowned slightly when the phone rang, but suspended dicta-

tion as she stepped into her anteroom to answer. "Home office calling, Mr. Layton."

"*Home* office?"

"Well it's Los Angeles. It must be—"

"Put them on."

When the call went through he barked: "Contact! Southwest General of N. A.! Layton talking!"—this being his idea of a telephone gambit, as indicating on-the-job-ness, make-it-short-ism, and close-the-deal-ation. The voice at the other end, taking cue at once, barked back: "Contact! Greetings George M. Layton! R. P. Gans talking!"

"*Who* did you say?"

"Gans! Vice President for Claims!"

"Oh, yes of course, Mr. Gans."

Mr. Layton's voice, which had been so dark, firm, and confident a moment before, quavered a bit at such overwhelming eminence. Mr. Gans went on: "You got that Shoreham flash?"

"You mean about the divorce?"

"I mean about the murder!"

"The—*what?*"

"Baron Victor Adlerkreutz, that lug she's been married to, has just been killed in what is described as a shooting accident in the Galloping Domino, a gambling resort about two miles from you, and you're to get on that case at once. It so happens that we're on that risk to the tune of one hundred thousand bucks, every cent of it payable to Sylvia Shoreham, and every cent of it due on a verdict of accident. Layton, when a man gets killed less than one year after taking out a thirty-thousand-dollar straight life policy, less than nine months after taking out a twenty-thousand-dollar endowment policy, and less than six months after taking out a

fifty-thousand-dollar accident-and-health policy, it *can't* be on the *up-and-up!* Layton, I don't make any charges against the wife, but I say the beneficiary under these policies is automatically under suspicion! I don't say she killed this man! I don't say anything. But I'm telling you it's worth one hundred thousand dollars to Southwest General that she doesn't get away with any false claims! You're to see that every bit of evidence we're entitled to is put in the record, that the District Attorney is advised of the existence of these policies, that we get a special autopsy, and above all else that she be held and that the body be held until I arrive there. Have you got that?"

"I have, sir."

"This means one hundred thousand dollars!"

"I understand, sir."

"I'll be there as soon as I get plane space."

"I'll be expecting you, sir."

He hung up looking a little less aggressive than he had looked when he first shouted "Contact!" Miss Jennifer, who had kept her key up during the first part of the conversation, had scooted down to the street, and now came back with a newspaper. It had the accident all over its front page, with Sylvia's picture prominently displayed, Vicki's a little smaller, and Dmitri's a tiny thing, but recognizable. Mr. Layton read, and Miss Jennifer read over his shoulder, making quick little inquiries to which he made rather uncomfortable replies. Soon she burst out: "Well of all the nerve!"

"No, Gans is right. She—"

"Sylvia Shoreham? Kill somebody? For a measly hundred thousand bucks? Why I bet she makes that on one picture. And besides what *for?* She *had* her divorce. She—"

"We're entitled to an investigation."

"You're entitled to plenty of trouble if you go around accusing *her* of murder. Just because he sees an easy way to get out of paying her, that don't say you've got to go and put your foot in it. You've got to live in this town, he hasn't. And besides, who says you're a claim agent? The last I heard of it you were a salesman, and—"

"I'm head of this agency."

He said this with a certain amount of importance, but in fact it was the crux of the situation that now involved him. It was just a small, one-man agency, having no claim adjusters or special functionaries. As in this city it dealt mainly in life insurance, claims had usually been a simple matter, with Mr. Layton calling personally on the relict, bringing check and often coming away with an application for annuity. That he now, in connection with policies he had never even seen, as a result of a case that had broken with the unexpectedness of a cloudburst, should have to discharge duties that he had never once thought about, appealed somewhat to his vanity, but at the same time left a vacant feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Within an hour, the vacant feeling had grown to a dreadful, vacuumlike ache. Treading wholly unfamiliar ground, carefully maintaining an outer show of on-the-job-ness, make-it-short-ism, and close-the-deal-ation, he called first at police headquarters and was shown into the office of Inspector Britten, who was immersed in a detective story and didn't look up at his inquiry as to the status of the Shoreham case. "Why, we're not handling it except for routine help, lab work and stuff like that. It's a county case, so it's in the hands of the sheriff."

"You don't know what they've turned up?"

"I don't know a thing, buddy."

Walking over to the courthouse, he entered the sheriff's office, only to find that the Sheriff was out, and that the chief deputy "wouldn't be in a position to make a statement about the case, as it's entirely in Sheriff Lucas's hands."

At the State's Attorney's office, he fared, at first anyway, a little better. As he had information, he was admitted to see Mr. Pease, the county prosecutor. That gentleman listened to the news of the three big policies, nodded, made a note. "Thanks very much, Mr. Layton. If we want further information from you, we'll let you know."

"What do I do about an autopsy?"

"I suppose the police are doing an autopsy, and if you'll show them your credentials they'll let you see their report."

"I mean a special autopsy."

"Have to get a court order for that."

Mr. Layton, who had no idea how to get a court order, or even a very clear idea what a court order was, said quickly: "I see." Then, drawing a deep breath, he said: "Oh, and one other thing, Mr. Pease. We're greatly concerned that she be held, and that the body be held, until the arrival of our representative from Los Angeles, Mr. Gans, and—"

"That *who* be held?"

"The beneficiary under these policies, Miss Shoreham."

"Are you crazy?"

"Well, I was instructed to—"

"You ever been on a case like this before?"

"No sir, not exactly, but—"

"Then you'd better understand that neither you, nor Mr. Gans, nor the Southwest General, or any other corporation, insurance or otherwise, is telling this state whom to hold or whom not to hold or when to release a body. It would be very convenient for your company, no doubt, to escape pay-

ment under its policies by hanging something on Miss Shoreham, as anything they hung on her would probably relieve them of liability. But we're not holding her, or the body, or anybody simply to accommodate you, or help your company beat a hundred-thousand-dollar rap. My suggestion to you and your special representative, Mr. Gans, is that you go a little slow in this case. A hundred thousand dollars probably looks pretty important to you, and I suppose to Mr. Gans. But I doubt if it does to her. Her reputation, though, might be a different matter, and you may find yourself in very serious trouble if you go around making wild charges against her."

"I wasn't making charges. I just—"

"You want her held?"

"Well yes sir, but only—"

"To be held she's got to be charged."

Shriveled, Mr. Layton went out to a drugstore and called his office, only to find that Mr. Gans had left on the three o'clock plane, and directed that hotel reservation be made for him. Mr. Layton didn't walk over to the hotel. He slunk there. At the desk he made a reservation for C. C. Gans, Los Angeles, for one night and possibly two, single room and bath, and O. K.'d the price: $6. But before he could do this he had to wait, while the clerk held colloquy with a girl. She was a rather pretty girl, with bright black eyes, round chubby face, and trim little figure. She was pleasantly dressed, in a little spring suit, and might have been a secretary, except that she had some slight touch of the gangster's moll about her that secretaries don't commonly have. The clerk was quite annoyed by her. "For the tenth time, Miss, Miss Shoreham is not seeing visitors. I can't ring her phone. She's taking no calls except from the Sheriff's office in case

they find her sister, or from the sister herself, in case she calls. Now do I make this clear? You don't seem to get it through your head that a terrible thing happened to her today. Every picture critic, movie reporter, fan magazine, City editor, and just plain fool in five states is trying to get through to her; they've already begun arriving in town hoping to see her in person, and she simply can't see every fan that shows up here and wants to be sent up."

"I'm not a fan. I got business with her."

"Your business will have to wait."

"She might not think so."

"I only go by her instructions."

The girl went off, but didn't leave the hotel. She went to a far corner of the lobby and sat down, to the clerk's obvious annoyance. Mr. Layton finished his business and started to leave, but something in the girl's voice lingered in his ear. It seemed to him that in that "She might not think so" there was some hint of a threat. He turned, crossed to where she sat in a mulish sulk, and said: "I couldn't help hearing what was said to you just now. I wonder if there's something I could do for you? I sometimes transact business for Miss Shoreham."

Insurance was certainly some sort of business, and if he wasn't doing much *transacting* he was at least trying to. She looked him over suspiciously and said: "You a friend of hers?"

"Well—more like an agent."

Smiling, as though it had all been settled now, he said: "Let's go have some coffee. In the dining room we won't be overheard."

They went into the dining room, ordered coffee and

canapes, lit cigarettes. He said: "Nice girl Sylvia. Very nice girl indeed. But she's in one bad mess now."

"What do you mean, bad mess?"

"Don't believe everything you see in the papers."

This cryptic fly, cast at random in the direction of something that might be water and might be a whirl of gnats in Mr. Gans' fevered imagination, brought a flash of fins and a spurt of foam. She said: "So you was in on the dirty work too, hey?"

"... What dirty work do you mean?"

"At the Domino."

"I was in town."

"You seem to know about it."

"You mean making something look like nothing?"

"That's what I mean."

"Let's say I'm a pretty good guesser."

He laughed. She laughed. She had big white teeth. He remarked on them, and on her eyes, asked if she had Spanish blood. She said no, but she was one eighth Indian. He said he always said if a woman really wanted to be good-looking, one thing she couldn't do without was a drop of Indian blood. He said he ought to have known it, because she had such beautiful black hair. The canapes came, and he poured her coffee, gallantly giving her his sugar. She said it didn't look like there was much use trying to kid him, did it? He said he hoped her eyes weren't kidding him, anyway. Abruptly she said: "I seen something out there today."

"At the Domino?"

"I work there."

"In the bar?"

"I deal blackjack."

"Oh yes of course."

"What's your name?"

"Layton. George M. Layton. What's yours?"

"Call me Ethel."

"Want to call me George?"

"I don't mind. George, I seen it all. I don't mean what they *said* happened. I don't mean what they done to fix it up and make it look like a accident. I mean I *seen* it. But don't get me wrong. I didn't come down here to make her feel bad or anything like that. That's why that clerk made me so sore. I came down here for just the opposite. I came down here to let her know it was all right and she didn't have nothing to fear. I come down to let her know that so far as I was concerned that husband of hers was a heel. You'd be that amazed, George, if you know the propositions he made me, while I was dealing him blackjack not an hour before she shot him. Wanted me to drive back to his shack with him for a 'small fun,' he kept calling it. Can you imagine that? It's not any of my business what was done. Just the same I do think she ought to make it worth my while. Don't you think that's only right?"

"I do indeed."

"You'd think she'd *want* to do something like that."

"I guarantee she wants to."

"So if you want to take me up there—"

"Not so fast, not so fast. Taking you up there would be simple, some other time, but, as you can easily imagine, she's got her own reasons for not seeing anybody today, not even me. Don't worry though, it'll be handled. Does she *know* you saw it? Were you there?"

"In the door there's a slot, with bars in front and a steel door behind. The door was open a little bit. I peeped in."

"And you saw something, is that it?"

"I seen him killed."

"By her?"

"If I told you that, you'd know as much as I do, wouldn't you? Suppose you do some talking now. And talk nice. About money."

"To spill it or skip it?"

"To skip it, I would rather imagine."

"She'll be interested to hear that."

"What do I do now?"

"Let me think. Where's Spiro?"

"Out at the Domino."

"I think he's the guy, not Shoreham."

"I would have gone to him, but he and Tony are so thick all of a sudden I was afraid. I work for Tony and I didn't know how he'd take it."

"I'm awfully glad you came here first. Now here's what you do. Have a buck off me and see yourself a nice picture. Around seven o'clock or so, come back here and wait to be paged. Don't go back to the Domino till you hear from me."

* * * * * *

When Mr. Layton entered the Domino, Tony was being pointedly disagreeable to some schoolgirls, telling them Miss Shoreham was not there, that he had no idea when she might come there, and that they certainly could not leave their autograph books for her to sign. It didn't seem a propitious time for inquiry, so Mr. Layton bought $1 worth of 10c chips and began playing roulette. But soon the phone girl came through, her plug bouncing against her knees, calling his name. Tony said he might take the call in the office. It

was Miss Jennifer, whom he had informed of his movements, with a telegram from Mr. Gans, evidently his last testament before explaining. It was full of exhortations like: *"Cannot impress on you too strongly importance prompt energetic aggressive action your part or refrain calling your attention Southwest General will expect same cooperation you she expects gets every man her organization."*

Mr. Layton listened as Miss Jennifer read this to him over the phone, then, two or three times, he heard something that was quite familiar to him, on account of Miss Jennifer's habits. It was the sound of a key being lifted. As he hung up, a short, round, flat-headed little man came into the office, and began peering at a road map that hung on the wall. Suddenly, fitting Tony's surprising courtesy, the key, and the little man together, Mr. Layton knew his call had been tapped, and he felt a hot, salt taste in his mouth, for he needed nobody to tell him that the pure in heart do not plug in on other people's lines.

Thus he who had been paralyzed by officialdom, by ignorance of the ropes he was trying to handle, by a conviction that he was afoot on an absurd and monstrous errand, had now become a different man, and an incomparably dangerous one. For bland cheek was an integral part of his daily life; he not only had a gift for it, but believed in it, as the sign of an up-and-at-'em-tude, and studied it avidly under the district manager, other agents, and such experts in salesmanship. He was a virtuoso at keeping the other fellow guessing, at never giving him a chance to take charge of the interview, of feinting him into the path of the argument held in reserve. He could dissemble, he could laugh, he could tell a little joke. He could be stern, he could plead. He could wink. And he could defeat, by stratagems developed by the

whole inner arcanum of insurance agents, any known method of throwing him out.

He didn't address Dmitri at once; indeed, he didn't seem to pay any attention to Dmitri. Instead, he drummed on the desk with annoyed finger tips, then lifted the receiver and asked for a number. When it answered he said: "Sheriff Lucas, please—Layton calling, George Layton of Southwest General . . . Well listen, sweetie, I don't like to get disagreeable about it, but haven't you any idea at all where he is, or when he'll be in, or how I can get hold of him? . . . No, there's no way *he* can reach *me.* I'll be on the move all afternoon and there's no use having him call . . . I'm sorry too, and I suppose you're doing your best and that God loves you or somebody does, but you're putting me to one awful lot of unnecessary trouble."

Hanging up, he spoke with the baffled weariness of one who has puzzled over human nature all his life, but can still make no sense out of it: "Maybe you can figure this one out. Sheriff Parker Lucas. If there's been any time in the last two years when you couldn't see that longlegged jerk anywhere you went, with his hand out for a cigar, a drink, a phone number, or what have you, I don't know when it could have been. But now, on a murder case, when I want him, when I'd like something for my vote, try and find him. It's a great life if you like a great life. Personally, I'd rather see a picture."

On the word *murder,* which was the only part of this elaborate harangue that mattered, he saw Dmitri's eyes leave the map and stare glassily at the wall. He lifted the phone, rang Miss Jennifer again, asked airily if the sheriff had called. Then he went out, paid the operator for his calls. Then he went in the gentlemen's room, combed his hair, whistled

The Minstrel Boy. When he came out, Tony and Dmitri were in a corner of the casino, whispering. He went into the office, called the apartment where he lived, and where he knew there would be nobody. He was holding the receiver to his ear, frowning at getting no answer, when Dmitri came into the room and went to the map again. But he looked up pleasantly when Dmitri said: "You been to Goldfield?"

"Oh yeah, plenty of times."

"They have a hotel there, yes?"

"The old brick hotel, it's still there. Little more hotel than Goldfield needs right now, but they'll take care of you."

"Always wanted to see this place. *Doch,* it's impossible to start now. I want to see the Sharf, too. What makes you think it's a murder case?"

"Think? I know."

"You talked to the police, yes?"

"Yeah, I talked to them, but I generally always haven't got time to wait for the police to wake up. Insurance is my line. Southwest General of N. A., and when you've handled as many cases as I have, you know and you don't even know how you know. You just smell it."

"I don't smell nothing, myself."

"To me, it's quite a stink."

There was a long pause, while Mr. Layton set his heels on the desk and lit a cigar. When he could see through the wreathing smoke, he noted that Tony was in the room. Then, with the air of one who regretfully pronounces a final judgment on a matter long since closed, he said: "Her big mistake was making it accident. That gets an insurance company a little sore. Now if he was just dead, then O. K., he had to die sometime, and we were on the risk. But when she

made it accident, that made the big accident-and-health bond operative, and that makes a difference of fifty thousand bucks. Well, that's just too bad."

". . . *She?* Who are you talking about?"

"Shoreham. The widow."

"You mean *she* made it accident?"

"She gets the dough, don't she? As beneficiary?"

"How can you talk that way?"

"What have you got to do with it?"

Mr. Layton snapped this at Dmitri sharply, as though his discussing the case at all were a very suspicious circumstance. But Dmitri looked at Mr. Layton as though he were plain crazy. "You ask me that? What I have to do with? Me? Dmitri Spiro, president of Phoenix Pictures, that makes all Shoreham production? Me, the best friend of Baron Adlerkreutz? You ask me what *I* have to do with?"

"And what have *you* got to do with it?"

Tony was cold, hard, malevolent. Mr. Layton answered with a smile, a genial freckled smile, in the accents of Dmitri. "Me? You ask me what I got to do with? Me, agency chif for Southwest General of N. A.?" Then, speaking with a smile not so genial, he asked Tony: *"And what have you got to do with it?"*

"You can go to prison in this state. For slander."

"And you can hang, for murder."

"Suppose you get out."

"O. K., O. K."

He got up, but Dmitri held up his hand, said there should be no hard feelings, that Tony didn't really mean what he said. Mr. Layton, turning from the door in very friendly fashion, said: "Yes sir, yes sir, making it accident was bad. If it had been suicide, now, I wouldn't have a word to say."

Tony and Dmitri looked at each other, and Dmitri said: "Why?"

"We don't pay off on suicide. Not for three years, we don't. It used to be one year, but during the depression we raised it. Got to be too many fellows taking out a fifty-thousand-dollar life policy in favor of the little woman, then diving out a fifteenth-story window in some hotel downtown. Same way on the accident-and-health, all bets off on suicide. So, if she'd make it suicide, it wouldn't have concerned the Southwest General of N. A. even a little bit. But when she made it accident, that concerns us a lot. That means exactly one hundred thousand bucks to us, so it's what you might call, the hundred-thousand-dollar mistake. I'm going to miss her, too. I go to all her pictures. All of them."

He sat down again, in no hurry to go. Dmitri stared at Tony in abject misery, and Tony stared at Mr. Layton, a look in his eye that one sees in the eye of a Siberian tiger. After a long time, Dmitri looked over and said: "Look here, old man. It's ridiculous. It's quite ridiculous. It was an accident, we all know it was an accident. I was there. He died in my arms. Just the same, nobody wants any trouble. Can't we make a deal? Can't—"

"Hey, hey, hey!" Mr. Layton jumped up as though he had been shot, and said: "Don't you talk to *me* about any deal. *Not to me!"*

"Why not?" Tony's tone was savage.

"Weren't you talking about laws?"

"Laws? What do you care about laws? All you're thinking about is money. O. K., so it's dead open-and-shut. Why don't you make a deal? It's like Mr. Spiro says, you're talking through your hat, there's been no crime. But she's a big picture actress and your measly hundred grand don't mean

half as much to her as not having any mess. Well, suppose they agree to tear up your policies? What do you care? Don't that let you out?"

Mr. Layton had a wild, instinctive notion that Mr. Gans, if he had been present, would have made a deal. But he had got a great deal further than he had even dreamed was possible, and his only clear idea was that he had to get out of there, that he had no authority to make a deal and that he had to consult Mr. Gans. Then, probably a deal would still be possible. Blandly he asked Tony: "Where's Ethel?"

"What's Ethel got to do with it?"

"Ethel saw something today."

"Such as, what?"

"I don't exactly know. Mighty pretty girl, Ethel is. Part Indian."

Tony's pasty pallor, as well as Dmitri's soft look of complete collapse, told him quite a lot. Mr. Layton added: "She's not coming back to work, I guess. She's a little worried, though I can't imagine what for." Then, to Spiro: "I'd talk to Ethel, if I were you. She'll be in the lobby of Shoreham's hotel at seven o'clock."

He picked up his hat, and there was a tense, strained silence. A tall man and a thin man came in, pitched a package of telegrams and letters on the desk. The tall man said: "Fan stuff mostly, been coming in at the hotel ever since the story went on the air. I told Western Union to hold the rest of it and we'd pick it up. This stuff, I thought we better take charge of it, so nothing gets lost."

"O. K., Bushy. Thanks."

Benny sat nervously down. Mr. La Bouche suddenly said "Oh," as though he had just remembered something, and found a letter in the stack of telegrams. Leaning close he

mumbled: "It's that special Vicki sent her, in case she wouldn't answer his call. I took it along, because God knows how it'll affect her. Better hang onto it a few days, hah? Before we give it to her to read?"

Dmitri fingered the letter, stared at the special delivery stamp, at the round clock with an arrow showing the time of receipt, that had been stamped by the hotel. Then, looking straight at Mr. Layton, he said: "Boys, I got an awful premonition creeping up my back that in this communication Victor Adlerkreutz announces his intention to take his own life."

"What?"

Benny's mouth hung open in amazement, but Mr. La Bouche grabbed him quickly and said: "Shut up! I would think you'd know by now that when Mr. Spiro has something creeping up his back, he's practically never wrong."

But Mr. Layton, so badly crossed up he didn't quite know what he was doing, was already at the door. To Dmitri he said: "I'm going. If that's a suicide note, I know you don't want any strangers around when you read it." Then, not sure that he shouldn't make some show of encouragement, he turned a ghastly smile at Dmitri and said: "Yeah, I know you're kind of unstrung about it."

* * * * * *

Promptly at 5:30, Mr. Gans came up the ramp, his jaw stuck out and his lower teeth visible against his lip. He listened to what Mr. Layton had to say, made no comment until they were almost in the centre of town. Then, with explosive vehemence, he said: "Great! You've done the right thing, Layton! You've used your head and you've used your

guts and Southwest General of N. A. is proud of you! I always say, be aggressive! Move fast! But, if the other party listens to reason, be reasonable! After all what are we, Layton? Insurance men, not hangmen!"

Chapter Eight

MR. LAYTON had barely left the room when Tony leaped at Dmitri, caught him by the arm and began shaking him savagely. "Are you nuts? Listen, fellow, you can't trifle with this thing! What'll they think of us, cooking up a dilly like we told them already, and then saying it isn't so? Spiro, you dealt these cards, and there's no way now to make it a misdeal! You've got to play them!"

"Didn't you hear what he said?"

"Couldn't you make a deal?"

"Didn't you hear me try? What happened?"

"Couldn't you sock him in the jaw?"

"*Me?* He was a big guy. *You* sock him."

"Taking it lying down—"

"Wait a minute, fellow—wait a minute. This wasn't just a guy. He was from a big insurance company. What good would it do to sock him?"

"It would do plenty of good. A cheap jack of an agent comes out here, lights a cigar, and scares you so bad you turn around and pitch it all out, what's been done. Don't you get it? *I'm* in on it too! I've been your witness, I've stood for what had to be said to put across accident. Look

where that puts me in this town if you go around and tell them it's all just a lie you thought up."

Mr. La Bouche spoke in a quiet, worried way. "We think we been getting away with it, but who says we have? Who says that mug is from an insurance company at all? Who says he's not a cop's stool pigeon?"

"But switching, that'll fix it, hey?"

They all sat in gloom for a few minutes. Then Dmitri picked up the letter. "And besides this note can't go to the Sheriff. It must be another note. Because who knows what this says? Maybe some fool thing. Maybe something about Hezzel. Maybe cracks it wide open."

"Can't you *burn* it?"

Mr. La Bouche explained patiently to Tony that if it had been merely an ordinary letter, burning was possible, but with the postoffice having a record of the delivery, to say nothing of the hotel, burning would be wholly risky. Substituting another letter, one that indicated Vicki intended to take his own life, was the best solution all around. And Dmitri added: "We don't switch, nothing like that. We tell the same thing. Just like we told it before. Except we remember now, it was *Vicki* who say, 'I must have a real one.' Was *Vicki* who say, 'I don't get this thing till you make it plain.' We know nothing about a note. The *Sharf* opens the note, says it must be suicide. Then all see it was suicide, the insurance goes *kaput,* company no have to pay."

Tony stormed, pleaded, called Dmitri names. But Benny, the first forger of his time, went out, and when he returned he had the bar's small electric coffee machine. Filling it with water from the cooler he plugged it in, and while he was waiting for it to steam he looked at the letter. "Green ink, pals. That's the first thing. Where's his pen? Anything

you put inside has to match up with this envelope outside, if I'm doing it—if the idea is, we're using this envelope. I guess that's what you mean, use the envelope to show it come in to the hotel before he even got shot."

Mr. Spiro unclipped a pen from his shirt pocket, handed it over. "He borrowed *my* pen to write it with. All full up, all full up with green ink."

Benny turned the letter over. "Worse and more of it. Maybe the wop is right. Maybe we better leave it lay. Because the flap has a crown on it. It has that crown on it, and the inside paper will have to match."

"That's under control."

Mr. La Bouche explained that he and Dmitri both knew where Vicki kept his paper, up at the shack, and that they would get some at once. This proved to be unduly optimistic, for their entrance into the shack was barred by officers at the door; but on their plea of checking what clothes would be needed for the funeral they were let in, and under the guise of making memoranda they helped themselves to paper, and were back at the Domino in less than an hour. By that time, Benny had steamed open the envelope, extracted the brief note that it contained and tabulated the words in it, in pencil, on another sheet of paper. He pointed the pencil at Mr. La Bouche and Dmitri, looking very solemn. "Now get this, lugs. This presents one of the most unusual problems I ever had challenge me professional skill. How this guy spelled the English language was something to write home about. He had his own system, but it was nothing like Webster's system, or anybody's system. But this is what it means: You got to say what you say with these specimen words, these words I got wrote out here, that he used in the original note. Because that's all the words I can

be sure of Because if I go and spell a word one way, and they dig up a lot of his handwriting at the shack and compare, and he spelled it some other way, that cooks us, friends. You got it?"

Tony scowled, but whether Dmitri or Mr. La Bouche heard it, would be hard to say. They were walking abstractedly about, passing and repassing each other on the linoleum carpet, in the throes of literary composition. Presently Mr. La Bouche said: "There ought to be an affectionate note in it, Dimmy. That's what I miss in all this. Nobody seems to *care*."

"Like for instance, Bushy, how do you mean?"

"Well, you know, something like 'My mind is all on you, Sylvia,' or maybe 'My heart is all *with* you' would be better, 'as the shadows lengthen toward the west'."

"East."

"East. Right. You got that, Benny?"

"Look, get this once and for all. If any shadows lengthen in this, they lengthen toward the north, because that was where he was going on his honeymoon and its the only point on the compass I know how he spelled it. He didn't bother with any H, but how do I know he didn't spell east with a Y? Maybe he thought it was rich in vitamins."

"Shadows are out."

"Bushy, you see something so: The end of my lang, lang trail a-winding? Course that's not it, but it gives a rough idea. I wan' something with a punch."

"Boys, something short would help."

'The Long, Long Trail is in."

"Trip with two p's, but no trail. Sorry."

"And then, Dimmy, of course I'm only spitballing, throw it out if you don't like it. But don't you think there ought

to be some *little* thing? Like, 'Be kind to—' What was the name of that hyena he had in the private zoo out on the ranch?"

"You can have 'switt puss,' but no hyena."

"Maybe he's right. The hyena's name was Spiro."

"Dimmy, on a thing like this I always like a quotation of some kind. We'll say like a quotation from Shakespeare."

"On that, Bushy, I would hesitate."

"It would give it class."

"But suppose they find out how Vicki felt about Shakespeare? After Julius Caesar flopped, Vicki always said Shakespeare was lousy."

"There might be two opinions about that."

"I know. I know how Vicki came to produce Julius Caesar. He was wishing he didn't have to pay for a script and somebody told him about Shakespeare, and he said 'Why not? It don't cost anything to find out.' So we made it and it flopped, and it cost more than the Phoenix Studios cost. Just the same, he blamed it on Shakespeare, and I don't know if we should put in from Shakespeare."

They volleyed the point back and forth, while the shadow of the Sierras crept closer, and presently enveloped the Domino in luminous blue. Benny, the pencil clicking against his teeth, studied the limited vocabulary which must form the basis of the projected composition, and presently started to write, first in pencil on scratch paper, then with the fountain pen on Vicki's crested stationery. Soon talk ceased, and an uneasy silence fell on the room. He wrote slowly, trying every word on the scratch paper, smoking and considering. He must have been under a strain, for when Dmitri complained at the rate of progress, he snapped back: "Shut up and lemme alone. To do justice to me skill I got to take me

time." When the note was done he handed it over, first reminding them to handle it with handkerchiefs. Though Tony refused even to look, Dmitri and Mr. La Bouche read the following:

Dienstag

Silvya, Switt Puss, Kuss Kuss:

Be oder not be, that is quashon. Todayheute comes Divarsepeper, todayheute comes And. Silvya Puss, I can no live wit out You. My Son go don, nort Star come opp, is batter Vicki go out. So, Gottbei. Gottbei Dimmy, Gottbei Buschka, Gottbei, Gott hehute Hezelchen. Wiedersehen & Kuss Kuss.

* * * *

Dein

Vicki

Be gut gegen "Spiro."

Chapter Nine

THE SHERIFF spent a solitary afternoon on the front porch of his home, which was a pleasant house in the middle of a ranch four or five miles from town, on a road that forked off the road that led past the Galloping Domino. It was a cattle ranch, and he sat staring at his beeves; as to what was going on in his mind his face gave no clue. Once he went inside, picked up the phone that stood on a small table in the hall and called Mr. Flynn, to see if anything had been heard of the missing girl. Once Mr. Flynn called him, to say that there was such a jam of calls from the special writers who were arriving by plane, train, car and bus, that nothing was coming in from outlying parts of the state at all. The Sheriff told him to notify the police what he was doing, then lock the office and go out to the Galloping Domino, having all long distance calls transferred to there. Then, if the police learned something, they could report it, while other dial calls would simply get no answer. Mr. Flynn said O. K. The Sheriff, as soon as he had eaten a light supper served him by the Mexican woman who kept house for him, got in his car and drove over there. He found Mr. Flynn in the office, studying a pile of photostats, charts and reports. "What do they show, Flynn?"

"Not a thing."

"All checks up?"

"So far, it does. Only fingerprints on the gun are Spiro's, but the way he tells it he was the one had hold of the barrel, and it's only on the barrel you get clear prints. Trajectory of the bullet corresponds right. Fired from an angle, on the right, which would just about be the way it would be doing the scene the way they said they did it. I don't see anything wrong with it. What do you want the girl for?"

"Sister's worried about her."

"When are you having the inquest?"

"Soon as we find her. Did you eat?"

"Not yet I haven't."

"You better go, then. I'll sit in here and take anything that comes along. Take your time. I'm not going anywhere."

When Mr. Flynn had gone, the Sheriff dug into the pile of evidential matter a bit grimly, and perhaps more carefully than Mr. Flynn had done. Soon the door opened and Dmitri came in. He said: "He told you, Sharf? Mr. Flynn? About this stuff?"

"What stuff?"

Dmitri pointed to the stack of communications brought from the hotel, explained why they had not been given to Sylvia. The Sheriff said: "O. K. I'll release them to you after the inquest."

"This one note—"

"Yes?"

"It's from Vicki. I can tell by the crest. He borrowed my pen last night to write her a note. I didn't give it to her yet. Might make her feel bad."

The Sheriff picked up the note, dropped it in his pocket,

went back to his photostats. Dmitri said: "You're not reading it?"

"It's to her, isn't it?"

"I thought maybe, was evidence."

"Of what?"

"Skip, skip."

"You did right in turning it over to me, and I'll see that she gets it. Now, is there anything else you wanted to see me about?"

"No, sir. No, thanks. You want me, I'll be at Sylvia's hotel at seven o clock."

"O. K."

* * * * * *

Dmitri had barely gone when a call came, and the Sheriff answered. "Officer Enders talking from Lone Pine."

"Sheriff Lucas. What is it, Enders?"

"We found her."

"Alive?"

"No, sir."

"That's what I expected. Shoot."

"The Army planes reported it, right after dark. Two lights pointed straight up at the sky. They took it for some kind of signal at first, and we got over there. The car was standing on its rear bumper, jammed against a ledge. It couldn't be seen from the road. She must have driven it over on purpose, because there was no way it could have swerved that far by accident."

"What have you done with the body?"

"Nothing. Waiting orders."

"You have an ambulance there?"

"Yes, sir. Called one before I climbed down there."

"Then send her right in to town. No inquest necessary, that I see. Come in yourself and report to me here at the Galloping Domino at nine thirty. I'll call the Adlerkreutz inquest for ten."

"Yes, sir. Is Flynny there?"

"He's at supper."

"I got one on him. I turned up more dirt on the other one, the sister Sylvia, that picture actress he was bragging about."

"You—did what?"

"Didn't he tell you?"

"No."

"He met her today. She shook hands with him, or so he says. Boy, was he letting me know it. Well, it just so happens that when we went looking for Hazel, we turned up a trail on Sylvia that would make a hooker in the Red Mill at Tijuana look like a Minnesota schoolteacher. If there's any tinhorn sport in this state she hasn't checked in with at some hotel the last two months, I don't know who he could be. Tell Flynny we found another one: Mrs. John L. Smith, registered at Bill's Place, six miles below here, exactly one month ago today; except that Mrs. Smith, when somebody went up and asked her to autograph the lunchroom menu, signed it Sylvia Shoreham. Will you tell him, Sheriff? I just love to rib Flynny."

"I sure will."

"Thanks, Sheriff."

When Mr. Flynn returned, the Sheriff said: "Is this all the stuff you got?"

"That's all. This other stuff, the picture people brought it from the hotel, but I couldn't see what we had to do with it. I didn't even open it."

"Where's the report from Enders?"

"From—*who* did you say?"

"Enders. At Lone Pine."

". . . That wasn't a report. That was a rib."

"What he told me was a report."

"Then write it up."

"It was a report and you wrote it and where is it?"

Mr. Flynn hesitated for a moment, said nothing. He was a big, heavy-set man of forty, darkly sunburned, vividly handsome in his slacks and flannel shirt. Presently he said: "What's the big idea, Parker? You've been stuck on this woman four or five years now, and I don't blame you. She shook hands with me this morning, and when she came out she remembered my name, and when I rang her a little while ago to tell her how we were coming, she still remembered it. She's a swell girl. Well, so she's been playing around? Well, so what? What have you got to do with that?"

"I'm asking you for Enders' report."

His face purpling deeply under its sunburn, Mr. Flynn went behind the desk, opened the center drawer. In it was a little pile of scratch-pad sheets, with penciled memoranda on them. He found the one he wanted, handed it to the Sheriff. "O. K. She registered at these three hotels on these three dates under these three names, the men she was with all different. She was seen by several different people at each place and didn't even try to conceal who she was. There you are. That's the Enders report."

"Are those other officers' reports?"

". . . Yes."

"Hand them over."

* * * * * *

Sylvia, like most actresses, had made an art of relaxation: it held the secret of bright eyes, glowing color, and the vivacity needed in front of a camera. She lay on her bed now, eyes closed, hands folded on her stomach, no part of her moving except her chest, which rose and fell a little as she breathed. She had put on a black dress, but even without this she would have looked pale, haggard, and worn in the half light that came in from the street, for it had been in truth a trying day. But she was not asleep, for an alert hand went out at the first sound of the phone: she had given orders that she was to be disturbed for two calls only: her sister, or the Sheriff. The desk informed her that the Sheriff was in the lobby. She jumped up, put on her shoes, patted her face, and went out to admit her guest.

He came in, and at her invitation sat down on the hotel sofa, not answering her question about her sister. She turned on the lights she wanted, poked up the fire the hotel had made for her. Then she went over, sat down beside him and contentedly put her head on his shoulder. "Is there any news?"

He said nothing, and his arm did not go around her. After a long time he said: "Yes." His voice had hanging fur on it, and shook. For the first time she really looked at him then, and became aware of his eyes. They hadn't softened since they sobered Mr. Flynn, and by now, indeed, were a little frightening. He waited a long time before he went on, in slow, husky, measured words: "This morning, after saying you killed a man, you told me you thought you did right. I couldn't hardly believe my ears then. I've killed two men since I held this office, and I never felt I did right. I felt I did what I had to, but I hated it. Now I know what you meant. Because I could kill you, as I sit here right now, and I wouldn't feel it was wrong. I'd feel it was right."

"And why do I deserve to die?"

"Because you've been deceiving me, and the people of this country, and the people of the whole world. Because you're not what you pretend to be. Because you're living a dirty, rotten lie."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

From his pocket he took a wad of crumpled scratch-pad sheets. Smoothing out the first one, he studied it and said: "On March 8 you spent the day at the Tumble Inn Roadhouse thirty miles south of here with a man that was known to several people there as Ted Genesee, a croupier at the Luckybuck Club not two blocks from here. You signed in as Mr. and Mrs. Edward Gentile, you spent the day, and at five o'clock he drove you back here. On April 2 you spent another day with Genesee at the Garden motor court, on the road east. On April 3 you didn't bother to leave town, but checked in with him at the Westhaven, down at the depot. On April 5 you switched off from Genesee to a Cuban named Carlos Loma, that handles the stick for Dawson's crap game over at the Monte Carlo. You went with him to Bill's Place, down the line, and Hollister's Dude Ranch, and Hack Schultz's camp up in the mountains."

He laid aside the first slip and picked up the second. He talked for ten minutes, giving names, dates and places, and when he got through he was twisting his face, and occasionally squeezing his mouth with his hand, to keep from sobbing. When he had some sort of control he burst out: "How could you come over to me this morning with all that talk about hating those cheap pictures and tell me you were going to make more like The Glory of Edith Cavell? And how could you pretend to be Edith Cavell?"

"I didn't pretend to be Edith Cavell."

"You did."

"I was an actress playing a part."

"You used her name and said her words and died her death and for two hours you pretended to be her. And all that time you were nothing but a common trollop that anybody could have, and if I were to go out of here and leave you dead on the floor right now, it wouldn't be any more than you deserve, or any different from how women like you generally wind up."

She started several times to say something, each time swallowed it back. Then she sat with a fixed, desperate look on her face, staring into the fire. He said: "You told me this morning you killed your husband."

"I did kill him."

"I don't believe you."

"A jury will, I think."

"You want them to?"

"Dimmy says it was accident, and so will I."

"Your sister killed your husband."

"No! No!"

"I say she did. If he said he would marry her and then he wouldn't do it, that would be enough reason for a whole lot of women. You didn't have any reason."

"I told you it was the only way out."

"Except to sign his contract."

"I tell you I did it."

"Will you sign a confession you did it?"

"... Yes."

"Then you better write it. Because I'm telling you, I know who did it."

After a long time she got up, went over to the writing desk and wrote:

May 13

To Whom It May Concern:

Today, at approximately 12:30 P.M., at the Galloping Domino Gambling Hall, I shot and killed my husband, Victor Adlerkreutz. My sister, Hazel Shoreham, was not present, but will probably say she did it in order to save me. This will not be true.

Sylvia Shoreham.

She got up, handed it to him, and resumed her seat on the sofa. He went over to the desk, put it in an envelope, marked it "Shoreham Confession." Then he said: "This ends the matter."

"Am I under arrest?"

"Your sister has been found."

"She—where is she?"

"It's bad news."

Briefly, under terrible emotion, he told her what had happened. Then he said: "Sylvia Shoreham, I love you more than any human being on earth. I'd give my right arm to be able to touch you right now. I'd give the other arm if I could be the one that helped you through this sorrow that must be heavy to you, I know how heavy from the way you've tried to protect that girl. But I don't forget that judge, in the picture. He knew that woman hadn't done what she said she did, but he did what he thought he had to do just the same. That girl can't ever be tried for her crime now. She's beyond human justice, and she's beyond speaking for you, too. I've called an inquest at ten o'clock tonight, and at that inquest I'm going to let Spiro and his friends make it accident. I'll let you bury the dead, and have no more trouble about it. But if you try to go into pictures again, I

have this and I'll use it. And you can tell Spiro that The Glory of Edith Cavell goes back in the can and it stays there. You are not going to pretend to be something you're not any more, if I've got anything to do with it."

Her face didn't move a muscle, and he got up. "Isn't that funny? At lunch, at that lunch we were going to have, I was going to ask you to start a fund for our tuberculosis hospital. It's a poor state, and we got no hospital and we ought to have one, and it could be built now, for soldier use, and then turned back to us later. That's what I was going to ask."

"I don't mind contributing."

His face was tortured, and his eyes full of tears. "I can't take your money. If I did I'd have to tear up your confession, and I swear that stays with me till I die—or you do."

He looked at the envelope, put it in his pocket. Then, a blank look on his face, he pulled out the other envelope, the one Dmitri had given him. Identifying it after a moment, he said: "This came for you. Spiro didn't give it to you because—well, I guess you can guess why."

He laid the envelope in her lap. It was Vicki's Baltic handwriting that did what nothing else had yet done: it brought a torrent of tears. She said: "I can't face it . . . I've had all I can stand today! I—"

He went over, picked up the letter, walked with it to the fireplace, dropped it on the flames. Then, his shoulders shaking, he stumbled out of the room.

Chapter Ten

AT NINE, Mr. Flynn closed the Domino down, and for the next hour quite an assortment of people assembled there. More and more officers showed up, until there were a dozen or more. Most of them brought evidential exhibits of one kind and another, which they left with Mr. Flynn in the office, so the desk was piled high with envelopes of various sizes, all neatly labeled. Then there were the correspondents. Some of them had arrived on the afternoon plane, some by train, some by car, but there were a score or more of them. They were reinforced by several local people who corresponded for picture publications, and who got about one item like this a year and made the most of it. Then there were reporters from the local papers, with their photographers. Then there was Mr. Britten, who sat apart and had little to say to his men. Then there was Mr. Pease, the county prosecutor, who did not as a rule attend inquests, believing that his presence embarrassed the coroner, but who had made an exception of tonight, possibly because of the opportunity that would be presented to shake hands with a prominent actress. Tony, with worried, abstracted politeness, found seats for all: big crowds, after all, were not a new event in his life.

Dmitri arrived around a quarter to ten, with Mr. La

Bouche, but not with Benny. Almost on his heels came Mr. Layton, with Mr. Gans and another man who looked like a lawyer. He was a new Mr. Layton, one who had expanded and put on fifty pounds of weight since the afternoon, a commanding, calm figure of a man who dominated his two companions as a general dominates his aides, and waived them to seats with that kindly thoughtfulness that does not owe courtesy but graciously bestows it. Then he went to a corner and beckoned Dmitri over. When Mr. La Bouche came too, he smilingly shook his head, and Mr. La Bouche retired. Dmitri, however, had changed since the afternoon himself. He had stiffened, and reverted to his usual lofty peevishness. He said: "What you want?" in a bellicose way, and then, without waiting for Mr. Layton to speak, added querulously: "Plizze, plizze, my time is waluable."

Mr. Layton said: "What's cooking?"

"What do you mean, cooking?"

"Was that a suicide note in that box today?"

"I don't know. The Sharf took it. You'll have to ask him."

"You see Ethel?"

"What were you doing, trying to kid me? Hinting around that she knew something? She's just a pretty girl that wants little job in pictures. So, I've given her a job. Tomorrow she goes to Hollywood, and tonight she won't come here. So plizze, am busy man."

"Getting tough, hey?"

"Not tough, only busy."

"She didn't like it, how you treated her."

"What did you say?"

"She thought three grand wasn't much for what she knew. She thought considering how much it's worth to you, you didn't take that liberal, friendly attitude she'd been hoping

for. She thought you acted in quite a tightwad way, and she's hurt."

"How do you know what she thought?"

"That's not her with Benny."

"What? They went to the picture show. He called me—"

"That's her girl friend. Right now, she's having a ride in my car. She likes my car. She likes me. And she'll be right where I want her when the time comes. However, since you're busy—"

"What do you want, ha?"

"I asked you something."

"You mean this note?"

"Yeah. Start talking."

"I'm pretty sure it's a suicide note. The Sharf, he didn't open the note, when I gave it to him. He took it to give Sylwia, but it should be suicide note."

"Fellow, it better be a suicide note."

"Plizze, plizze. It will be."

"If you had your policies here, so accidentally on purpose they could get burned, it would end my interest in the case. But since you haven't, and the verdict at tonight's inquest is going to determine my liability, I don't take chances. I'm telling: it better be a suicide note."

"Plizze. Wait only."

"Then O. K."

Mr. Layton returned to Mr. Gans and the lawyer. Dmitri went over and stood looking unhappily into a juke-box. Mr. Pease, the prosecutor, drifted over to Mr. Britten. "Cy, did you notice something just now?"

"Not particularly."

"An objectionable party by the name of Layton was in my office this afternoon, representing an insurance company.

He wanted a special autopsy and all but demanded I charge Sylvia Shoreham with murder. Now he just went into a huddle with Dmitri Spiro. You know, these insurance companies go too far. I wouldn't ask much to rap that bird over the knuckles for obstructing justice."

"He was in to see me too."

"Oh yeah?"

"I had him followed."

"... What for?"

"Just a hunch. He had another talk with Spiro, before this one. Out here at the Domino, for a half hour this afternoon. But before that he met a girl that deals blackjack out here, and then later, after he met his boss at the plane and they got a lawyer over to the hotel, he met the girl again, and they went up to his apartment, and you'll notice she's not here."

"What are you getting at, Cy?"

"Something funny about this case."

"You don't mean it's *my* case?"

"You heard about the sister?"

"I didn't attach much importance to her."

"They found her. Dead."

"What?"

"Couple of hours ago."

"Say, I think I'll stick around."

* * * * * *

Sylvia arrived on the stroke of ten, a fur coat over her black dress, a small black hat with veil giving her face a wan, pale look. With her was Mr. Daly, the lawyer who had obtained her divorce. The Sheriff, who had been in the

office with Mr. Flynn, the undertaker, and a deputy now came out. It was the deputy's question to the undertaker about shipment of the Shoreham body that informed the correspondents of the second fatality in the case, and at once they crowded around him, asking questions. He put up his hand: "I don't know any more than you do. Shoreham's been to the mortuary and made formal identification of both bodies. Now the Coroner's bringing his jury out here for the inquest. Don't get excited and soon you'll know all that anybody knows."

As he spoke the Coroner arrived, with another deputy shepherding the jury, six unhappy-looking wretches, four men and two women, all middle-aged except one of the men, who looked like a young law student. On their heels came the interne who had responded to the first call and the two orderlies who had come with him, all looking like members of the high school football team. A dozen other men arrived. The Coroner at once took the jury and a number of others into the office, where Mr. Flynn pointed to the spot where the body had been found. The Coroner was evidently hurrying, for he bowed once or twice, in an apologetic sort of way, to Sylvia, and kept saying to his jury: "Just so you get the picture, that's all. We'll put it all in evidence in the regular way, under oath when we examine witnesses, but it'll save time if you look the place over and get it all clear in your minds."

He then led the way back to the casino, where a roulette table had been set in the middle of the floor for his convenience, with chairs for the jury and a single chair as a witness stand. He sat down and Mr. Flynn sat beside him, rapping for order with the croupier's stick and announcing the opening of an inquest into the death of (with a glance

at a memorandum he held in his hand) Victor Alexis Olaf Hermann Adlerkreutz, and summoning all who had knowledge of the event to come forward and give their evidence. He then directed witnesses to hold up their right hands, so that they might all be sworn together. Quite a few hands went up, including a number of constabular hands. He then bound them to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and the Coroner cleared his throat and called the young interne who had pronounced Vicki dead. He gave his testimony briefly, and the orderlies, on inquiry from the Coroner, said that was how they remembered it. Next was the physician who made the autopsy. He reported with considerable medical verbiage. Then police photographers were called and identified their work. Tony was called. He hadn't witnessed the shooting itself, he said, but he had supplied the gun on Mr. Spiro's plea they wanted to rehearse a picture scene. Mr. La Bouche was next, and repeated what he had said earlier in the day, with gruesome details this time, about how he had been manipulating the imaginary camera, as represented by the electric fan, and had seen the handkerchief tighten on the trigger, paying not the least attention to it, and not even realizing the significance of the pistol report for some moments, so accustomed was he to blank cartridges in his work. The Sheriff stared at him, after this glib and wholly convincing tale, in wonderment.

It must have been an hour before Dmitri was called, and he took his place in the chair with the air of one who had indeed played many tragic roles in his life, not all of them on the stage.

Prompted by the Coroner, he told once more the harrowing tale he had told in the afternoon. But he filled it with little variations, he noted how odd he had thought it that

Vicki should insist on all this pother to understand a scene which was really the director's business anyway, a point he hadn't bothered to mention before. He told how he expostulated at the time it was taking, on the ground that he was hungry, a bit of evidence that drew a smile from all, even the Coroner. At one point the Sheriff interrupted sharply: "Are you trying to tell us that this here Adlerkreutz killed himself?"

"I don't know, Sharf. I really don't know. It was all very funny. I tell you, I feel sure I saw Tony take shell from a gun. How did one more shell enter this gun? Did Vicki put it there? I don't know. I only tell what happened."

The Coroner looked at him sharply, and said: "Wait a minute, wait a minute. You didn't say one word about this today."

"I was upset. I don't know what I said today."

"Did Adlerkreutz say anything about killing himself?"

"To me, no. Don't know about odder people."

Dmitri looked hopefully at Sylvia, but she was staring stonily at her gloved hands. He looked at the Sheriff, but got only a puzzled frown in return. The Coroner said: "I don't get this. A Coroner's jury is reluctant to return a verdict of suicide under any circumstances, but here you, without adding any item of evidence, make a lot of mysterious remarks about what you thought, and intimating that the deceased must have put the shell in the gun, and I don't understand it, that's all. Are you holding something back?"

"No, plizze, I hold nothing back."

"This is all conjecture?"

"Con—"

"Just guesswork?"

"Absolutely, yes sir, *guesswork*."

Irritated, the Coroner led Dmitri through the rest of his story, encountered much less gabbiness. Dmitri stood down. Then he walked off to one side. Then, to his horror, he heard the Coroner say to his jury: "O. K., then as soon as the Sheriff identifies this other stuff for the record, I'll instruct you in the law and you can consider your verdict."

* * * * * *

He caught Mr. Layton outside, between the parked cars, where he had followed when that gentleman got up and hurried out of the hearing. But when he grabbed Mr. Layton's arm, he was flung roughly against the side of the building. "So that's the kind of a cross you pull on me, hey? Get up there and mumble something about how funny it looks, and then go off in a corner, and that's supposed to make it a suicide, hey? Where's that letter she was supposed to get?"

"Plizze! We wrote the letter! We—"

"Then where is it?"

"I gave it to the Sharf! He took it! He—"

Waiting no longer, Mr. Layton strode off to the rear, no doubt to drag his surprise witness out of his car and parade her in to the Coroner. Dmitri didn't wait to see. He turned to the open window at his side, dropped his elbows on the sill, and quite unrestrainedly began to weep. He seemed to have his head in some kind of storeroom, and his tears splashed down on big green dice in an open box on the floor.

He was in a dreadful spot all right. But he had become part of a business that is accustomed to dreadful spots, and has been well-schooled in what to do about them. When a crisis arises, some writer usually bellows: "I got it, I got it,

I GOT IT! Cut to those sirens! Cut to those motorcycles coming down to street! Maybe it's not story, but it's ACTION!"

That may have been why Dmitri suddenly straightened up, fished a cigarette out of his pocket, lit it, and dropped it into the box of celluloid dice.

Chapter Eleven

THE SIRENS were a success, quite as much of a success as they invariably are in a fast, gangster movie. They came screeching out from town at 80, motorcycles in front, the chief's car behind that, the salvage truck behind that, the ladder truck behind that, and the pump behind that, a fine, glittering, noisy, 100% American midnight motorcade. Even so, it was tame in comparison with what went on *inside* the Domino. The inflammable dice, if they had been all, might not have amounted to much, and Dmitri's desperate scheme might have failed for the simple reason that a fire takes a great deal longer to get going than a theatrical imagination realizes. But the box happened to be sitting within an inch or two of the big intake cable that led from the connection outside to the electric meter at rear. So when the dice flared hotly up they did not ignite the wall, for it was made of some sort of fireproof composition, but they did melt the cable, so that the first result of the cigarette was that the place went completely dark, without so much as a fuse blowing out. For a minute or so, as Americans versed in the idiosyncrasies of power houses, the gathering sat around without saying a word: one or two muttered gags about a blackout were rebuked by the Coroner, who said it was not

a frivolous occasion. But when another minute went by and no light came on, the Coroner said: "Well, we got to get on with this. Tony, do you think you could get us a few candles?"

"I'll do it."

It was the voice of one of the girl dealers, and at once there was the sound of her heels clicking off to a corner, and then out. At once came her scream, and then another, and then another. "It's on fire, the whole storeroom is burning," she called, as soon as she could run back into the casino. At once came the Sheriff's voice: "Out, everybody. Take it easy, but get outside." The front door opened, making a big rectangular patch of light from outside, and Mr. Flynn's voice said: "This way." Several photographers, carrying cameras and evidently concerned for their pictures, hurried out. But hardly had Mr. Flynn spoken when Tony, frantically, yelled: "The cash! Girls, the cash! Girls, don't let me down without getting the cash out!" For the cash, amounting to several thousand dollars, had been rung up on the registers, but it had not been put in the safe, and Tony's voice betrayed only too well what he stood to lose if the place went up and took this precious paper with it.

Within a few seconds there was a frightful din, as the girls groped their way to the registers to retrieve the cash, the officers groped their way to the girls and tried to get them out, and the photographers groped their way inside again to take pictures of the scene by flash-bulb, all yelling at the top of their lungs. But a dull, flickering glow took command at last, accompanied by the smell of smoke, and by the light of that, the girls ran out, handing their money to Tony at the door. After them stamped the irate officers. When

the fire apparatus arrived, in answer to Mr. Britten's call, some of the crowd was out front, but most of it was at the side, watching Tony, Jake, and one or two others throwing water into the storeroom window with buckets.

Dmitri, being already out, took no part in any of these proceedings, but stood apart, some little distance off, apparently studying how best to take advantage of the diversion he had created. When the firemen piled off their trucks and began coupling their hose to the plugs along the main highway, he spotted the Sheriff, standing with the first chief near the ladder truck. Going over and speaking in a large, confident way, he said: "Can I bother you one minute, Sharf?"

"What about?"

"Plizze, is confidential."

Wonderingly the Sheriff followed him a few steps off, until they were on the banks of the little mountain stream. Dmitri cleared his throat, said mysteriously and importantly: "Sharf, there was one thing. One thing I didn't tell when Excellenz ask me. Sharf, I feel sure this Vicki, this my friend, he killed himself."

"What you got to go on?"

"Last night he wrote a letter."

"How do you know?"

"He took my pen. My pen with green ink. He wrote a letter to Sylvia, put a special on, drove out and mailed it. Sharf, when he finish this letter, Vicki cried. He cried like a baby. In my arms, he cried. Sharf, I *know* this man took his own life."

"Well, you could be right."

"What did she say when she read this letter, ha?"

"That the letter you gave me?"

"Sure, it was the same one."

"She never saw it."

"She— What did you say?"

"I burned it up. She got kind of upset when I handed it to her. Broke her up. I didn't see any reason for making her feel worse. I pitched it on the fire. It's gone."

Dmitri made a noise like a very small pig. The Sheriff watched an emergency truck of the electric light company turn in at the gate, then turned a reflective eye on the wretched little figure in front of him. "You seem kind of upset yourself."

"Yes, Sharf. He was my friend."

"We'll never know."

He started to rejoin the fire chief, but Dmitri caught his arm. "No, Sharf, plizze don't go. I must talk to you."

"What about?"

"Money."

"In what way would you want to talk to me about money?"

"Man to man."

"You sure you don't mean crook to cop?"

"Why, that's ridiculous."

"Then say what it is."

"Now, Sharf, don't get sore, because I don't know how goes with you. Sometimes a guy needs money, sometimes not."

"He generally does."

"O. K., then if twanny five-fifty will help out, say the word, here I am. Cesh, or any way you want it."

"You think I could be bought for fifty bucks?"

"Bucks? Don't make me laugh. Grand."

Even the Sheriff, no stranger to matters cinematic, blinked

at this gay riposte. "You mean you'd pay me fifty thousand dollars to cover up something in this case?"

"Cover up? Who said cover up?"

"Then for what?"

"That I can sleep my nights, Sharf. That I can go back to Hollywood and hold up my head. That I can look people in the eye. That they don't say, he let his friend be killed. That they don't say, there goes the dirty heel that didn't think any more of his friend than to let him use a loaded gun. That they don't say—"

"I got the idea."

"Sharf, I know this note says Vicki will take his own life if Sylwia gets a divorce. All I ask, Sharf, is that you tell you read note *first*. *Before* you burned it up. You burned it up, that's O. K. Who wouldn't? My God, to save a girl from feeling so bad, anybody would burn it up. You do this for me, so all know Dimmy Spiro is no heel, that all know Vicki himself did this, that's all I esk. No cover up. The truth, Sharf! The truth!"

The Sheriff cogitated over this some moments, staring at Dmitri, or at that spot a few inches behind Dmitri's head that seemed to be his focal point at certain moments. Then he said: "Here's where you get the surprise of your life. I'm taking your money."

"Sharf! Sharf! I die! From happy!"

"I want your check."

"Anything."

"Make it to Parker Lucas, Treasurer."

"Treasurer what?"

"Just at large."

"O. K., do like you say."

"I won't testify that you read the letter, but I'll testify

there was a letter, and that I burned it. If you want to testify that you lent him the pen to write the letter, and that he cried and made remarks that led you to think it was a suicide letter, then O. K., that's up to you. But I'll agree if the inquest turns out in a way that interferes with your sleep, to return your money."

"O. K., Sharf, it's wonderful!"

The Sheriff led the way to his car and got in, beckoning Dmitri to follow. Then he turned on the top light, and Dmitri got out a single blank check. Then, using the brim of the Sheriff's hat for a writing table, he wrote a check, handed it over. After examining it carefully, the Sheriff put it in his pocket.

O. K., Mr. Spiro, thanks."

"Ah, Sharf, you don't know what you do for me."

"You set that fire?"

". . . What you say, Sharf?"

"I asked you if you set this place on fire."

"O. K., Sharf, I did."

"You're paying for that too. Every cent it takes to repair that damage, so Tony doesn't even put in a claim."

"Sharf, you know I will."

Chapter Twelve

THE INQUEST, when it assembled in a quite battered casino, showed every indication of frayed nerves. It was, and had been even before the fire, in the last few minutes of its life, and the jury, to say nothing of officers, witnesses, and newspaper men, wanted to get away. The Coroner rapped for order, and instructed the jury that they were to certify the fact of death, the cause of death, the manner of death, if they had been able to ascertain it, and any consequences of death they thought proper to include, particularly whether they knew of any persons who should be held for the grand jury. He was interrupted by the Sheriff, who asked permission to add to his testimony. He then said what he had promised Dmitri he would say. Dmitri was then permitted to testify about the letter, and especially the way his head would hang in shame if it were fastened upon him that he had been careless enough to let his friend be killed by accident, whereas in truth the affair had been a deliberate, if cunningly concealed suicide. The Coroner said: "You are to disregard the last two pieces of evidence, since conjecture, regard for personal feelings, or other irrelevant things don't concern you."

The jury whispered for two or three minutes, then one

of the middle-aged men got up and said: "We find the said Victor Alexis Olaf Hermann Adlerkreutz came to his death by bullet through the heart fired from a gun in his own hands and the hands of Dmitri Spiro in an accidental and unintentional manner."

"So entered."

There was a stir as the newspaper people stood up, and the Coroner opened his mouth to declare the inquest at an end.

"Just a minute."

* * * * * *

The sound of feet moving toward the door stopped, and Dmitri caught the Sheriff's arm, whimpering, whispering, pleading. But the Sheriff paid no attention, being evidently interested in Mr. Layton, who was striding with masterful mien toward the Coroner's table. Then Dmitri did what was perhaps the first stupid thing he had done in a long and terrible day. As he hung to the Sheriff's arm, he saw a letter in the Sheriff's pocket. With Mr. Layton just a few feet away, and Ethel slithering her way forward in his wake, he evidently thought it no time to hesitate. Taking the letter between a roguish thumb and forefinger he flipped it out of the pocket and said: "Sharf, Sharf, you kid me! You didn't burn this note at all! You—"

But when he saw the envelope he stopped, and his face froze in horror. The Coroner, who had been whispering in puzzlement to Mr. Flynn, stopped too, he being no more than three feet away. For there, in the Sheriff's handwriting, were the words: "Shoreham Confession." Reaching out, he took the letter from Dmitri. Then, taking a knife from his

pocket, and acting with grave, slow deliberation, he slit it open, took out the slip of paper that it contained, read it. Then, taking off his glasses and looking frighteningly solemn, he said: "Sheriff Lucas, Sylvia Shoreham, Tony Rico, Dmitri Spiro, and Gerland La Bouche, it is my duty to inform you that you are under arrest, that you must submit yourselves at once to search, and that anything you say here may be used against you."

* * * * * *

No matrons were present to search Sylvia, but the Coroner swore in the Domino's phone girl, and instructed her what she was to take, what to leave on the prisoner. The two women then went off to the ladies' room. Police, expert on their job, made quick work of the men prisoners, while the reporters, still in the dark as to this unexpected twist, tried to break through the Coroner's silence for their deadlines. It wasn't until Sylvia and the phone girl returned, and a little memo book taken from her handbag had been placed on the table, that the Coroner resumed. Looking at the book, he handed it back to Sylvia; then, in a slow measured voice, read the confession. It emptied it, as no fire could have done. The newspaper people stampeded for their deadlines in a noisy, shouting throng, and for a full minute after their departure the air outside was full of the noise of their taxis and cars. The Coroner, who had rapped angrily for order, waited until things quieted down. Then he turned to the prisoners and said: "Is there any statement any of you people wish to make?"

Heads went together and in a moment Mr. Daly said: "I came here, Doctor, to represent Miss Shoreham, but Mr.

Rico, Mr. Spiro, and Mr. La Bouche have asked me to take charge for them too. On behalf of them, I inform you that I have advised them to stand on their constitutional rights."

Mr. Flynn said: "How shall I charge them?"

The Coroner said: "Murder, accessory after murder, suppression of evidence of murder, obstruction of justice, and perjury."

"Miss Shoreham didn't testify."

"Disjoin her from the perjury charge."

"What murder?"

The Coroner looked at the Sheriff in some annoyance. "Sheriff Lucas, are you in your right mind?"

"I am."

"The murder of Victor Adlerkreutz as confessed by Sylvia Shoreham in a statement that has just been taken from your pocket."

"That statement is not evidence."

"That's for the grand jury to determine."

"That statement was given me by Miss Shoreham on my threat to prosecute her sister for killing Victor Adlerkreutz."

"Why didn't you present it?"

"It's false."

"Or might this be the reason?" Mr. Flynn handed over, and the Coroner grimly accepted, a slip of paper.

"What is it?"

"It's a check. A check taken from your person when you were searched just now, signed by Dmitri Spiro, and made out to you."

"To me, as Treasurer."

"Of what? The Parker Lucas Benevolent Association?"

This got a laugh, but Sylvia suddenly looked up, as though it meant something to her. The Sheriff said: "Whatever I'm

Treasurer of, the check's not evidence and don't concern this inquest."

"Bribery might interest the grand jury too."

"No bribery. Sorry, your honor. Bribery begins with the acceptance and retention of good and valuable things and it generally involves cash. A check proves an honest man. It's been gone into many times. A check is not evidence until it's cashed, and the cash is not evidence until it's kept. What I'm treasurer of I don't care to say at this time."

"If Miss Shoreham's sister committed this murder, or you think she did, why didn't you put that fact in evidence?"

"There's been no murder."

"Sheriff Lucas, will you stop trifling with me?"

"I'm not trifling. Hazel Shoreham is dead."

The Sheriff related briefly the discovery of the girl's body earlier in the evening. Then he went on: "A homicide is not a murder until a jury says it is, and with the murderer dead no charge growing out of murder could ever be brought. Just the same, it seemed to me these picture people, in their desire to keep the Shoreham name out of this, had trifled with me and trifled with this state. The question was, how to get something on them, and I deliberately waited until the end of this inquest, or nearly the end of it, when I was going to break in on you with the truth, and then at least we'd have them for perjury. All, that is, except Miss Shoreham, since she didn't testify, but I didn't mind about her, because her effort to deceive me was at least from a motive no worse than trying to save her sister. But these men were concerned with money, the film they couldn't release if this scandal got out. So I was ready to shoot, but this man, this man Spiro here, crossed me up."

The Coroner's face had changed quite a lot during this

laconic recital, and the jury obviously believed it. The Coroner, in a different tone, said: "How do you mean he crossed you, Parker?"

"By setting this fire."

"By—*what?*"

Tony jumped up with an exclamation, but Mr. Flynn rapped for order. The Coroner said: "Well! It's *one* thing we could get him for."

"*If* Tony prosecutes."

"You think I won't?"

"Yeah."

The Sheriff drawled this out with half-lowered eyelids, then added: "On account of you and Spiro being such good friends lately. You wouldn't cross a pal, would you?"

"I'd—have to think about it."

"I thought so."

The Sheriff turned to the Coroner, went on: "Friend Spiro set the fire to bust up the inquest until he could get me by the arm and try to buy me off. I couldn't to save my neck figure what he was up to, because I hadn't let out a peep yet, but when he said some more about suicide, and wanted me to say I'd read that note he talked bout here, I begun to smell insurance. And then I saw a way to get them all, and at the same time get our state what it's needed so bad all this time, that tuberculosis hospital. I told Spiro to make out his check to me as Treasurer. And I had reason to think that whatever was paid for accident, that wouldn't be paid for suicide, I could get *that* for our hospital too, and teach the insurance company a lesson. And I didn't have to be told how much I could tap Tony for and this La Bouche, and maybe some others of them that had been trying to make suckers out of us."

"Parker, you went too far."

"Who says I did? We got one of the funniest states in this Union. It's a big state, and once it was a rich state. Now it's not, and only a few people live in it, but we all know those mines are going to come back, and I speak for every man, woman, and child in it when I say we all made up our minds long ago that we weren't going to let it go to pot while we were waiting for whatever is in store. We've kept our state clean and given our children schools and our motorists roads but we had to do it our own way. We couldn't do it with taxes because we didn't collect enough. We did it with divorce and gambling and other things you all know about but I won't go into here. We give them the decentest divorce, the squarest gambling, and the best-regulated things of other kinds, that you can find anywhere. We went on the principle our state's preservation was involved, and if it was in the public interest and nobody got hurt, it was all right. You mean to tell me it's not the same way here?"

Nobody answered. The Sheriff went on: "Now it's been broke wide open, and a verdict of accident is out. Just the same, if this idiot hadn't pulled this so-called confession out of my pocket, it would have given us our hospital, and everybody would have been taught all the lesson that was necessary."

"You think so?"

* * * * * *

Mr. Layton, who had been completely forgotten these last few minutes, now stepped truculently forward. To the Sheriff he said: "So, with a signed confession from her on

you, it's the other sister. With a fifty-grand bribe on you, it's just taking up a collection for t.b. patients. With Hazel Shoreham made the murderer of Victor Adlerkreutz, instead of the beneficiary, Sylvia Shoreham, the Southwest General of N. A. is hooked fifty thousand dollars of life insurance, hey? Not while I'm here, we're not. Your honor, I'd like to present a witness. One that'll tell who *really* killed Victor Adlerkreutz."

As Ethel, motioned on by Mr. Layton, came diffidently forward, there were many exchanges of glances, and the Coroner said to the Sheriff: "There's nothing I can do but hear her."

"I should say not."

The Coroner told Ethel to be seated, asked her to hold up her right hand, swore her in. He had Mr. Flynn take her name, uneasily asked Mr. Pease if he wanted to take over the examination. Mr. Pease said he was doing very well himself, and should continue. He told Ethel that since he had no idea what she knew, perhaps the best thing would be for her to tell her story in her own way, and she did so, with a breathless, beady-eyed earnestness that could no more be doubted than a train-announcer could be doubted.

She said she dealt a game of blackjack that morning to a foreign gentleman known to her as Vic, though she had no idea he was Sylvia Shoreham's husband. Then, she said, Jake the bartender whispered to her Sylvia Shoreham was in the office. She was that excited, she said, that she couldn't count her chips, and paid Vic $1 to which he was not entitled. Soon, she said, Jake came out and called Vic and Vic went in the office, but she had no chance to go look because as soon as she rang up her cash three gentlemen came in and one of them wanted to play with $1 chips. She

pointed to Mr. La Bouche as the high-limit customer, and then went on: "He played and he played and he played, and he lost $50 and wanted to get it back and all the time I seen Tony trotting in with a champagne set-up and I knew something was going on and I almost went wild. Then the little man looked at his watch and said come on, and this gentleman cashed his chips and all three went in the office. Then I started to go in. I was going to make out like there was two chips missing and this gentleman should look and if he had them in his pocket I'd give him cash, and then while he was looking I was going to hand my lipstick to Miss Shoreham and ask her to autograph my apron. But then Tony, he seen what I was up to, and said beat it back to my table."

"When was this?"

"Around ten-thirty."

"Go on."

"So then they drove off."

"Who drove off?"

"First Vic, and then Miss Shoreham. And then Mr. Spiro. he played roulette while he was having his boots shined. Vic went in his car and Miss Shoreham went in Tony's car. But then, it took about an hour, here she came back. She parked in front, but didn't come in the casino. That meant she had gone in the office the side way. So then Vic's car came back with the lights on and some girl was driving and she let Vic out and then turned the car around and waited. So Vic come in the casino and went over and said something to Mr. Spiro and Tony told him his ring was in the office and he went in there. I kept watching Tony till he went out back and I started for the office door."

"When was this?"

"Some time after twelve."

"Did you go in?"

"No, sir. I put my hand on the knob, but then I could hear her voice and something told me to stay out. I couldn't hear what she was saying but it had a funny note in it. So the slot wasn't quite shut, the door that closes it I mean, and I peeped. I could only see that corner where the desk is, but she was over there, carrying on and carrying on and carrying on. Then she stopped and began looking for matches to light a cigarette. She opened the middle drawer and tried to bang it shut and caught her dress. So then she did bang it shut. So then she opened the righthand drawer, where the guns are kept. I seen this look come over her face and then she took out a gun and raised it. Then Vic was between me and her and then he was up there beside her talking to her and she put the gun down—"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute."

The Sheriff turned to Mr. Flynn: "Did Miss Shoreham, Miss Sylvia Shoreham, come into my office this morning?"

"She did, yes sir."

"How was she dressed?"

"Gray slacks, blue sweater, red ribbon around her hair, red shoes. We was talking about them slacks after she left, me and Dobbs and Hirsch."

To Ethel, the Sheriff said: "Describe the dress."

"It was green, with small brass buttons."

"It wasn't slacks?"

"She didn't have on slacks at all."

To a young officer, the Sheriff said: "Enders."

"Yes, sir."

"You had charge of the Hazel Shoreham case?"

"That's right, sir."

"You saw the body removed from the car?"

"I lifted it out myself."

"How was that girl dressed?"

"Light cream colored spring coat, brown shoes, light stockings, no hat, green dress with small brass buttons. The dress is in Mr. Daly's car. In the valise we put in there for Miss Shoreham."

There was a stir as two officers went outside, came back with the valise, and opened it. The effects that had been taken from the dead girl corresponded with the Enders description. Mr. Flynn opened an envelope, said to the Coroner: "Little snag of green silk we found jammed in that drawer." The Coroner lifted the dress, found a little hole over the right hip from which the snag had been torn. He turned angrily to Ethel. "What's the idea, coming up here at this hour at night, lying like that?"

"She's not lying."

Sylvia, over the protests of Mr. Daly, blotted tears from her eyes and said: "It all happened exactly as she says, and I'm sure she thought it was I she was looking at. My sister looked a great deal like me. She was often mistaken for me."

"What was she carrying on about?"

It was some seconds before Sylvia answered, and then a hush fell over the crowd that wasn't broken at once. She said: "She was insane."

"... She killed your husband?"

"Yes. I didn't actually see it. I had my back turned. But there can't be any doubt about it. Then I decided I was going to say I did it, and I made her leave, so nobody would find her there."

The tears were streaming down Sylvia's face now, so it was some time before anybody remembered Ethel. Then the

Coroner said: "Well—let's let this girl finish. All right, she put the gun down."

"She put it down, and Vic put it back. But then she picked it up again and put it in her mouth. I opened my mouth to scream, because I knew she was going to kill herself, but Vic grabbed the gun and got it out of her mouth and then it went off and—"

"What?"

The two voices, saying the same word, cut Ethel off, Sylvia's voice vibrant with joy, Mr. Layton's with utter consternation. Then Sylvia broke into a little sobbing laugh. "Thank God, thank God,—I might have known she never deliberately killed anybody. She was too sweet." Then she ran over, put her arms around Ethel, and kissed her.

From the shadows, with a sic-Semper-Tyrranis clang-tint, came Dmitri's voice: *"Sylwia Shoreham is windicate!!* SYLWIA SHOREHAM IS WINDICATED!"

* * * * * *

In a hotel bedroom, in the black hour before dawn, a phone was ringing. A woman dressed in mourning entered, answered, said: "Send him up." Then she went into a dark sitting room, opened the door into the hall, and sat down before a fire that had burned down to red embers. Soon there was a tap and she said: "Come." A tall man came in, closed the door, and stood uncertainly before her, near the fire. He said: "I didn't want to wait till tomorrow before asking you about those bodies."

"My husband was Dimmy's friend. I think he'd prefer that Dimmy took over the funeral. My sister—do I have to say at once?"

"Whatever you decide, if you'll call my office there'll be somebody there that'll attend to everything without you being put to any trouble."

"That is very thoughtful of you."

"And I want to apologize."

"We started the day with an apology."

"For shooting past a big moment in your life, without knowing it was a big moment. That's what you said. And that's what I have to apologize for now, except that my big moment was a much bigger moment than yours was, and it was also a big chance, an opportunity, and I didn't have sense enough to know it. If I had just had a little faith in you, I might have known that there was *some* explanation, that your sister was being mistaken for you in these hotels."

"Even if I deliberately deceived you?"

"Yes. And—I come to say goodbye."

He stood awkwardly a few moments, perhaps wondering if she would offer her hand. When she didn't and when she made no reply, he turned, took one or two slow, heavy steps toward the door.

"Parker!"

He turned, and she said, "Come here." When he was near to her she took both his hands in hers, pulled him down beside her on the little two-seater that faced the fire. "What are you talking about, goodbye? After the way you stood by me there at the hearing, and cleared me, and all the rest of it? And let me tell you something: If I ever found out that you had got those reports, and *didn't* all but kill me, I'd never forgive you. Now: Did you blackjack any money for your hospital? Is that what you were doing out there all this time."

"They all contributed a generous amount."

"How much insurance do I get?"

"That was the funny part. After tearing in like a wolf, they were just as friendly as you could imagine when the jury came in with practically the same verdict, 'in an accidental and unintentional manner,' with nothing but the names changed. The chief claim adjuster, man by the name of Gans, said: 'We'll go the limit to hang it on you if you used loaded dice—we mean you play straight, because we do. But *if* you play straight, we'll pay any just claim quick as any other gambler pays off, and with no more griping. We don't have to gripe, or gyp. The percentage is working for us, and we've got to win.' You'll collect a hundred thousand in all."

"Then I'll give that, and fifty I have saved up, to the hospital. Altogether, now, how much does that make?"

"Little over quarter million."

"That's a start."

"It assures the institution."

"... About Hazel."

"Just say, and I'll attend to it."

"I don't know whether to keep her here, or send her back to California. You see, I'll want her with me, and—"

"You staying here?"

"I might be getting married."

He took her in his arms, held her close, looked at her gravely, almost reverently. Then he said: "I'm going in the army."

"So am I."

"Doing what?"

"Nursing I think."

Presently he said: "Up to this minute, I been a little bit

in love with Edith Cavell, as well as Sylvia Shoreham. Now I'm not. I'm all in love with you. Because listen: I want you to go in the army. I want you to be a nurse. But I don't want you to wind up like Edith Cavell did. You hear what I'm telling you?"

"I'll wind up as I wind up."

"... That's right."

"When do you go in the army?"

"Twentieth of next month."

"Then the day after that, I go. But—until then, can't we be with each other? Can't I be here with you?"

"The sun's coming up."

"So it is."

"Come on, I want you to see your home."

In the gray dawn, a car slowed down on a deserted road, and turned in at the stone posts that marked the entrance of a ranch. In it were a man and a woman, saying nothing, sitting very close.

A HARD BOILED STORY OF LOVE AND MURDER IN RENO — BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE"

JAMES M. CAIN

Jealous Woman

THEY GAMBLED FOR HIGHEST STAKES

(*LOVE AND MURDER*)

IN THE CITY OF GAY DIVORCEES

To Ed Horner, Jane Delevan's dark red hair and shapely body were ideal ingredients for fancy flirtation under Nevada moonlight. But strange things happened when Jane's husband, Tom Delevan, came to town immediately followed by his beautiful and jealous first wife, Lady Sperry. Ed suddenly found plenty to make him wonder.

For instance: WHY was Jane leading him on? WHAT made Lady Sperry suddenly take a heated interest in *him?* WHO were the secret midnight callers who roamed at will through hotel bedrooms? And HOW were the hard-hating people he'd met involved in MURDER?

You'll find the answers in the tight-packed action, trigger-tense characters, and smashing climax of JEALOUS WOMAN. A sure guarantee of continuous reader-interest goes with this James M. Cain thriller!

Part One:

THE PLAYBOY'S SECOND WIFE

1

AT THE desk, when they said she was in 819, I knew hubby or pappy or somebody was doing all right by their Jane, because 19 is the de luxe tier at the Washoe-Truckee, one of our best hotels here in Reno, and you don't get space there for buttons. They're bright, big rooms on the southwest corner, facing the Sierras and overlooking the river, and they cost dough. I didn't state my business, or mention insurance in any way when I rang her. No smart agent would. I just said I was Ed Horner of Edgar Gordon Horner, Inc., and that her husband had asked me to talk to her in connection with a certain matter, so she said come up. And waiting for me, at the door of her suite, a cigarette in one hand and the knob in the other, so she could step inside if she didn't like my looks, was the Jane Delavan you read about in the papers.

Maybe you saw her pictures, but she was better-looking than they were, because it wasn't Hollywood cheesecake that she had, but strictly class, like you see on the society pages, and sometimes it's a little camera-shy. She was medium-size, and a little on the slim side, though there was plenty of shape of a nice, refined kind. But she didn't dress to show it. Her clothes cost plenty, you could see that, but they hung on her loose and careless, so your eye went up one fold and down the other. Her face was long, with plenty of sunburn, and her hair dark, but with red in it. Her eyes were hazel brown, but they had something in them that was going to cost me some sleep before

I got done with them. I mean they were beat up. Nobody had blacked them, but life had. She looked you straight enough in the eye, but not for long. Pretty soon she'd be looking at nothing at all, in a set, squinty way, and then she'd catch herself and come back to you, but with a little smile that was more to cover up than make like friendly. It was enough, pretty soon, to start me wondering about her, and unfortunately you don't wonder about one part of a woman and let the rest go. When that starts, you wonder up the line and down the line, and across and between.

But I couldn't honestly say I saw all of that at the time, even if I felt a little of it. What I saw mainly was a pretty girl that remembered my name from my giving it over the house phone, something an insurance man notices, because he's got to fix names himself. I didn't get to my business right away. I took a walk around the room, admired the view, said how lucky she was to get one of these suites. She said yes, it had taken some wangling. I asked if I could smoke, took out my cigarette case, got out a cigarette, felt for matches, didn't find any, put the cigarette back, snapped the case fairly loud. I never carry matches. If you can make the prospect light you, you're one up on him. He's generally glad to do it, but what he doesn't know is: it's a little personal thing, and once he does it he can't take it back. The time for a brush-off is past.

She lit me, and of course I jumped up very snappy and bowed to thank her and had a look at the lighter. "That's an interesting thing, Mrs. Delavan. May I ask where you got it?"

"At the gift shop in the lobby."

"Well—just the same, it's nice."

"I left my good one, that a soldier made out of a shell and that always lights in New York, and so I went down and got this. It cost $7.50 and I don't think it's a bit interesting and it hardly ever works, but if it has an admirer who am I to argue about it?"

"Anyhow, it's some of that A-1 local Reno stuff."

"If that be a point in its favor."

". . . Somebody been gypping you?"

"Those blue chips. A bit expensive, I'd say."

"Oh, *them.*"

"I was warned about the gambling, but—"

"Hey, hey, hey! It's straight! Why, if they so much as thought one of their dealers had turned a crooked card they'd not only fire him, Mrs. Delavan, they'd put him in jail."

"Well, it's simply wonderful to know that instead of loaded dice it was Honesty Boys and their simple, barefoot, galloping percentage that took my money. I'm broke, just the same—or almost. It's going to be two weeks before I can do anything at all. I'm furious at myself."

"Oh, we got plenty to do here—practically free."

"What, for instance?"

"You like to fish?"

"No."

"Shoot?"

"No."

"Ride?"

"Now *there's* a nice cheap sport."

"Not so fast, not so fast. We got a little number here called the Scout. It's a dude ranch, but I keep a horse there and he's yours any time you ring Jackie and tell her to get him ready."

Well, not quite, if you know what I mean. I keep a horse there, and his name is Count Ten, which will give you some idea of the blood that's in him. But anybody that would let a perfect stranger, and a girl at that, ride a thoroughbred horse, is plain crazy, and maybe I am, but not that crazy. But how would she know? For a pretty girl and a $100,000 sale, I could ring Jackie and have her saddle Bingo, who would put her back with his teeth, if she happened to fall off. "If you do like to ride, there needn't be anything very expensive about it."

"You seem most anxious to please me."

"Why not? Your husband sure pleased me."

"Do you mind giving me a rough idea of your business?"

"Insurance."

Her face went hard. "I'm not interested in insurance, and I don't believe my husband sent you here to talk about it."

"You ought to be interested, and he did send me."

I gave it to her, what he had told me, and I was casual, friendly and not too long-drawn-out. But the more I talked the more she burned, and pretty soon there was nothing for me to do but cut. Something was here I didn't understand, and until I knew what it was I couldn't go on. When I shut up she began to talk. "In the first place, everything my husband seems to have said to you is true. He has told you nothing that isn't true, and yet he has not told you the slightest part of his real reason for taking out this insurance."

"Which is?"

"If you don't mind, I'm going to talk to him."

She went in the bedroom, and in a minute I heard her voice on the phone. I could hear a little of it, and mainly it seemed to be: "Tom, you simply cannot do this thing to me. I can't face it, and believe me it will have consequences you don't even suspect"—stuff like that. So of course that made it perfectly ducky, because whatever it was that she meant I'd have to report what she said and that's when the trouble would start.

It was quite some time before she came out, and when she did she had on riding clothes. They weren't Western, like girls wear in Nevada, with tight dungarees, stitched boots, and cowboy hats. They were whipcord breeches, high boots, tailored coat, and derby hat, and crop, like they wear to the Eastern horse shows. She stood there a minute, pulling on her gloves, and then: "Mr. Delavan will speak to you about the insurance. Apparently I have no voice in the matter, one way or the other, except to protest, so I'd rather not be bothered about it any more, if you don't mind."

"There's just one thing."

"I'd rather you spoke to him."

"I'm trying to tell you: Hara-kiri's out."

"I beg your pardon?"

"We don't pay off on suicide."

"That's not what he's up to."

"I heard some of your call, and it sounded like it."

"Then you don't pay off on suicide."

"I just want you to know. And him to know."

"I rang Jackie, by the way, and she's getting me a horse. Do you mind if I go? It's getting late, and I shouldn't like to get caught in this country with night coming on."

"Do you have a car?"

"I'm taking a cab."

"I'll ride you out."

I rode her out and arranged to bring her back, and took Jackie aside and said if she showed any signs of being able to ride she should have a run on the Count. But where I went then, as fast as I could scoot into town, was the Sierra Manor, to see Delavan, her husband, and find out what it was all about. I preferred talking to him there than at my office, where he had come earlier in the day. I told him what she'd said and told him to put it on the line and put all of it on the line. "Just a minute, Mr. Horner. There's something in your manner I don't wholly like. You act as though I've concealed things from you."

"Well, *she* says you have."

"Pardon me, Mr. Horner, but I'll decide what's relevant."

"No. I will. What's back of this?"

"An action for annulment."

"That's she's bringing?"

"That I am."

"Then what's she doing here?"

"She came here for the usual six-weeks period of residence, expecting to get a divorce. With my knowledge, of course. But my situation changed. I couldn't let her."

"How did it change?"

"The lady I expect to marry objected."

"What did she have to do with it?"

"Though American, she's the granddaughter of an Anglican bishop. These people have strong, almost unshakable convictions

on the remarriage of divorced persons. So long as there was no help for it, she was willing to give up the church wedding, performed by her own rector, a thing that means a great deal to her. But when a chance remark of mine, made a couple of weeks ago, just after Jane left for the West, showed that grounds for annulment existed, the whole picture changed and she demanded that I take advantage of my opportunity. I've run into a pretty thick situation with her, I can tell you, and not only with her but the family. If I can get an annulment I have to do it."

". . . Annulment? You mean—you and your wife have been married in name only?"

"No, I mean her first divorce may have been defective. You've heard about corespondent unknown?"

"Yes, of course."

"Except she wasn't unknown."

"Oh, that was bad judgment."

"They let Jane's maid make the $500."

"Is the maid here?"

"I'm serving her papers today."

"As a material witness?"

"Yes. Compelling her to give bond."

"But what does she know?"

"That the alleged infidelity, on the part of Jane's former husband, was a complete phoney, cooked up by Jane, the husband, and the maid. That the whole divorce was collusive, based on manufactured evidence."

"Well, no wonder she's sore."

"She has no reason."

"Except she'll still be married to No. 1."

"Don't be silly. He's married again."

"Then he'll be a bigamist."

"Nowhere but in Nevada and on the basis of a Nevada decision."

"But you still feel guilty?"

"It upsets me, yes."

"And you want this insurance so you can begin taking the curse off it? So you can feel like a hero instead of a heel?"

"In case of eventuality, yes."

He began to falter and stammer, and then to talk fast and jerky, but straight to the point, as well as I could see. I mean, he got to it at last, the reason for this $100,000 straight life policy he had come in to see me about this morning. He had very little money, he said, in spite of his name, which he seemed to think had made me drop in a faint when I heard it, on account of the dough his family was supposed to have. It meant nothing to me, which may prove how ignorant I am, or on the other hand how big the country is. Anyhow, in West Virginia was an old coal mine he owned, that had been closed down, but that opened up again when some kind of a machine was invented that made operation profitable where they'd been in the red before. And he'd got a dividend check of two or three thousand dollars that he didn't expect. And what he wanted to do was sock this dough into the first premium of the life policy, so his wife would be protected the first year after the annulment, and he would feel easier in his mind about it. I said: "What about the second year?"

". . . I may have to let it lapse."

"So I judge. But I mean about her?"

"Mr. Horner, do I have to go on with this marriage for the rest of my life? Jane and I made a mistake, but in marriage a mistake takes two to make. Once it's erased from the ledger, why not be honest about it? Jane is a well-bred, good-looking girl, who's going to get married again and make some guy a swell wife. That's fine with me, and I wish her, and him when he comes, everything that life can give them. But I see no need for overlap. All I think is necessary is to see that she's protected in the near future—as I said, in case of eventuality. In the case of an annulment, no alimony, property settlement, or anything of the kind is possible, since of course it is merely the legal declaration that no marriage existed. But if I should die in the near future, if for some reason I did come into money and a

large estate were settled, I don't want her left out completely in the cold. Does that answer all your questions?"

It did, or I thought it did, even if it struck me he was more interested in going through the motions of protecting her than actually doing it. I mean, it seemed to me he was going to kid himself he was actually making her a present of $100,000, and square it up with himself for the way he figured to leave her, neither married or not married, just dangling in mid-air, with no court to take her side, because mixing it up that way is what most of the courts, including our 100% wonderful Supreme Court, seem to be fondest of. But I didn't see, on my end of it, why I was called on to step in and block the insurance in any way, whether she was squawking or not. Because in the first place, it's practically impossible to convince an agent he's doing anybody an injury, or in fact anything but a favor, in helping them become beneficiary of any kind of policy at all. And in the second place, there was kind of a personal reason I'd better be on the level about, as later the subject came up. My company, the General Pan-Pacific of California, General Pan for short, gives an annual cup to the agent making the best score for the year, all averaged up so the fellow in a small city has just as good a chance as a big city general agent, and my first few years, when I was just a kid, I collected four of those, one right after the other. But when Washington upped the high Army brass from four stars to five, the home office upped General Pan, because until then the cup had four stars on it, for his rank. And that new one, with five stars all in a cluster, I hadn't been able to get, and I wanted it, and specially before my thirtieth birthday, so bad I could cry. With this $100,000 policy, I'd grab it in a walk. And it was none of my business if next year he let it lapse or not. Plenty of policies lapse, and the contest had no rule covering that. If I wrote the business, and he paid the first premium due, that was that, and that was all. So when he finished, and I thought it over, and said O.K. I'd shoot his application through, I could feel my heart doing flip-flops inside. General Five-Star Cup, come to baby.

2

WHEN I got back to the stable, my friend Mrs. Delavan had the Count on the track, and Jackie was out there watching it. I mean it was something to see. He was under an English saddle, with curb bit and martingales, and my own Western saddle was nowhere around. Believe it or not, she was walking him. It was the first time I knew he *could* walk. He's a gray, with dark mane and tail, and a comical forelock that makes him look a little like Whirly, if you remember him, and he's a clown, but strictly a dancing clown, not a walking clown. And it took me a minute or two to figure it out. There was 105 pounds of will power on his back that said walk and he walked. In a minute her feet shifted and he went into a canter, then into a dead run. It was beautiful, the way he obeyed. I mean, he loved it the way she handled him, and he was letting her know it, every move that he made, how he liked to go when there was somebody up there that knew how to make him go. She pulled him down to a trot, and then, so sudden you wondered why she didn't go over his head, to a walk, and came on over. "What on earth, Mr. Horner, have you been doing with this horse?"

"Riding him. Why?"

"He has no more manners than a baboon."

"He been eating with his knife?"

"I don't think you even know what I'm talking about."

"We get there, he and I, and we get back."

"But it's a crime! What he came into this world with, his looks, his action, are beautiful. But what you've taught him, if anything, is simply embarrassing."

Jackie began sicking her finger at me, because she'd been telling me for some time that now that I had a horse it might be a good idea to learn something about him. I gave her the old so's-your-old-man and we went in the ring, where the jumps

are. He went into one of those whirling movie starts I had impressed the girls with. I thought it was pretty nifty, but she pulled him down stockstill before his front feet were halfway up in the air. "This is really dreadful."

"I like it, that stunt."

"There ought to be a horse court that would take him away from you and establish guardianship."

Jackie had told her he'd never been jumped, so she walked him off about fifty feet, turned him, let him look at the jump, then brought him up to it at a slow canter. When he got the idea she raised her hands and leaned forward, and he went over like a cat. She turned him and let him look at it again. He got the comicalest look on his face I ever saw, Then she took him over it again. "Put another bar on."

I did and he took it so easy I started to put on another. "Wait a minute. That we'll have to think about." She got down, lit a cigarette, studied him, and he did the same for her. She patted him and he nuzzled her. Then she stamped out the cigarette. "O.K."

I put the bar on and she rode him off and turned him. She let him look at it, then started him for it, and for the first time I felt a prickle of nervousness shoot up my spine. They came on, he hooked it up, she let off the reins and leaned forward, and he went up. It was a frightening thing to be under because all of a sudden you felt it, the power in those muscles, when it was delivered, all in a bunch, right where it was wanted, and when. And you felt it, how high that jump was.

They were over, and down with such a rush you could hardly believe one slim leg could take the whole shock and hold for the others to take over. It did though, and they were in stride again. Just then I saw the puppy, and she did, and he did. She swerved him, but he braided his legs. I was there as soon as she hit the ground, but she had had just enough warning to be able to fall clear. I knelt beside her, and she seemed to like it that my arm was around her. Then she sat up and opened her

eyes, and a look of horror came into them. I looked, and the Count was still lying there, with Jackie racing toward him. Jane jumped up, and just then he did. She went over and put her arms around him. "Baby! Did he knock himself out?"

She went over him, inch by inch, feeling his withers and hocks and every part of him, and he did the same by her with the tip of his nose. But he was all right, and pretty soon we started home. About halfway, she said: "In his fifth year, I make him."

"That's right."

"Then he's young enough, thank heaven."

"For what?"

"To learn. I'm here, and I'm going to teach him."

"He's all yours. Stable suit you?"

"Stable's fine."

When we got to the hotel, a girl in maid's uniform came running across the lobby from where she had been sitting, keeping company with the elevator girl, and waving a paper with a blue cover on it. She was one of those girls you don't hear about in England, but when you go there you see them all over. She was red-haired, and black-eyed, and pretty, and had a Cockney way of talking and kept going on about the "bloody garnishee," as she called it. I pretty well knew from my talk with Delavan what it was, and that it wasn't a garnishee, but I kept to myself what I knew.

Jane stood there, reading the paper, and her face got the beat-up look I've mentioned before, and pretty soon she looked up and held out her hand. "I think—I'll go upstairs, if you don't mind."

"I'll ring you."

"Please do."

She and the maid went on up and I went over to my office. I tried to have fun thinking about my cup that was coming. It didn't give me much. I could see Linda, my secretary, looking at me out of the corner of her eye. I told her I was going over

to Carson to close a deal, and wouldn't be back. Where I did go was out and walk around.

* * *

That night I was still restless, and stepped out a little to get my mind off her and the rest of it. I generally play roulette, but never when I'm feeling good. When I don't give a hoot I fool around with a stack of quarters. If I lose my stack, I go home. If I get ahead, so I'm gambling on their money, I make scientific mayhem out of it, and feel better. Before I saw her, I had shifted tables, and even joints, three or four times. At roulette, if you're winning, you pick up a mob that follows your lead, and right there is where I don't exactly trust Mr. Croupier. He may be honest, as they say he is, and as I firmly believe and tell everybody he is, and yet, I feel you ought not to put irresistible temptation in his way. If the bets are scattered, he has no reason to roll his ball any particular way. But if they're all aboard one number, or a small flock of numbers, every square on the board except those numbers is a winner for the house, and it would be unfortunate if that was the particular moment in his life he picked out to have a slight change of character. Just to be safe, I move. I even move up the street, to really shake them, and I'd done that a few times before I saw her. She seemed sulky and I thought she meant me. I went over to the bar, ordered a couple of the free drinks, and went over and handed her one.

"Thanks, Mr. Horner, but don't let me keep you."

"From what, like?"

"Well, you seem to be avoiding me."

I explained about the powder I'd been taking, and she seemed set back on her heels. "I—never even thought about that. You see, I've never had a winning streak."

"Never too late to learn."

"I've lost too much."

"Let me stake you."

I fished up a couple of pounds of what I'd been winning and chinked them around a little. In Reno, of course, they always pay you in silver. "I shouldn't, you know, Mr. Horner. It's a weakness of mine. If you keep rattling all that money around, I'm going to say yes, but—it'll all be gone, I assure you."

"I'll take a chance."

She started to play, and it was the craziest playing I ever saw. She just shut her eyes and plunked it down anywhere. "Hey, hey, that's no way to do it!"

"What's the difference? It's all luck."

"Yeah, but it's got to make sense!"

An insurance man, he thinks percentage, first, last and all the time, because what he's running is not charity for the widows, orphans, and aunts, like maybe you thought, but a great big wheel, with every chance figured by the actuaries, so that a bet is distinctly a matter of age, weight and occupation, and he hates to have anything running wild. So I took the young lady in hand and showed her a few things, like how to cut corners on a losing streak by running a small limit and fishing for small fish, like the 2-1 odds on one of the 12s, which some chance of two or three wins that would cause the switch from a losing streak to a winning streak. Once that happened, I showed her how to bunch her bets so as not to be on the hook for too much dough on any single roll, but at the same time to crack a pot if she really got a break. I showed her how, if she had $1 riding the first twelve, she should lay 50c on the first four and 25c on No. 1. Then, if the pill fell anywhere from No. 13 up, she had lost, but was only $1.75 out, and as she would be playing on their money, she could afford it. But if the ball fell in any number of the first 12, she cashed $2, and was 25c ahead. But if it fell in 2, 3 or 4, she cashed $2 on the first 12 and $4.50 on the first 4, and was $6.50 ahead. But if the ball rolled in 1, she not only cashed her $2 and $4.50, but $9, the pay-off on 25c at the odds of 36-1, and really did something for herself. "In other words, if you've got Lady Luck sitting there beside you, act like you knew how to treat her so she don't have to be a contor-

tionist to help you out. Besides, the way you do it, how would you know her? She doesn't like it when you don't place her face, any more than anybody else does."

So she got hot, and I gave her her head. She caught a gang pretty soon, and we moved. She upped her bets and I said O.K. I picked up her money, and got so heavy with silver I felt like a pack donkey, but when she dropped three $5 combos I walked off and out. "But please. Give me some money! I'm winning! I—"

"Then quit!"

"You're hateful! Now, to deny me—"

"I'm the best friend you've got."

On the street, when I put handful after handful of money in her handbag, so it felt like a suitcase full of bricks, she laughed. "It's the one silly streak I've got. On a horse, I'm a woman of ice. At other things I'm not stupid, I assure you. But when I get into one of these places I go crazy."

"That $227 will calm you down."

"Is that what I won?"

"About."

"Want to walk?"

On the bridge near her hotel we stopped and watched the water rushing along under the moon, and when I looked I saw somebody I hadn't known was there. I mean, up to now, allowing for stuff you might see in any woman that was jangled up over what her husband was pulling, she had been just what Delavan had said, a well-born dame that might meet somebody before long, but didn't live where I lived. Now, though, she was just a nice girl, nothing snooty, nothing horsey, just a girl with a guy on a bridge. "Do you realize, Mr. Horner, that you did something peculiar today?"

"And specially tonight, when I let you do the winning."

"Today you came to me, not to your beautiful horse."

"I should have, shouldn't I?"

"Just doing your duty?"

"Why, sure."

"Anyway, thanks."

She looked away quick, and I felt like a heel, because she didn't mean anything but a little flirting under the moon, but just to be sociable I could have played up to it. I wanted to, don't get me wrong about that. Just the same, I've got a policy on that stuff. Until that application was signed, sealed and forwarded with report of medical examination to the home office, no romance on the bridge for Ed Horner. I took her home and said good night. Couple of nights later I bumped into her again and helped her win some more. Moving from one place to another, she'd put her hand on my arm and I'd catch her looking at me, like maybe I was dumb on horses, but I had a few other things she liked. In the meantime, I had Delavan examined by the doctor, got his check, and sent his papers through to Los Angeles. Then I felt free to call her. "How do you feel about dinner tonight, Mrs. Delavan?"

"Well, let me see, how do I feel?"

"Just inquiring."

"My maid is summoned to court. Oh, that's right, you were there when she told me about it. Her case comes up at four, and I'll have to be there, as it's a question of bail."

"That oughtn't to take all day."

"Then I'll be free."

"Around seven?"

"I'll expect you."

I went to the hearing, just to keep the record straight, and sat in the back of the room. Delavan was there, and the maid, and Jane, and a couple of lawyers. It took about ten minutes. The maid was held, in $250 bail, and Jane took cash out of her handbag to put it up. I felt kind of proud I had a little something to do with that cash. She wasn't broke any more.

* * *

That night I expected her to be upset, but she didn't show any ill effects, and we went to the Bonanza for dinner. Then I drove

her to Virginia City, the old mining town, for a brandy at a bar there, and after that we took a walk on the boardwalk to look at the pioneer stuff. Then we came back to Reno for a little more circular golf, and she won a little, but not much. Then we strolled over to my office to look up the Count's pedigree, so she could see where those gaits came from. When I put on the desk lights she spotted the cups and brought one over to read the engraving on it. Then she said: "You're such a funny thing."

"How?"

"Such a—go-getter."

"Is that funny?"

"But I mean it as a compliment!"

"Then O.K."

"My world is oh, so veddy well-bred. In plain English, well-heeled. Well heeled heels that would regard go-getting as a distinct social solecism."

"As—*what?*"

"I just said that to see your face. As a distinct breach of form. But you, you really like to bring home that cup, don't you?"

"And I do it, don't make any mistake about that."

"I like you for it." She took my head in her hands and put a little soft kiss on my mouth. I put my arm around her and pulled her to me, to mean it. "No, please."

"If not, why not?"

"I'm still married. It would be messy."

* * *

On the doobknob, when we came in, had been a notice of a wire. So when she began looking up the pedigree I rang to find out what it was. They read it to me, and it was from Los Angeles, and I saved it:

DELAVAN POLICY MAILED YOU TODAY BUT HOLD DELIVERY PENDING FURTHER ORDERS.

MR. KEYES ARRIVING YELLAND FIELD TEN TOMORROW WEDNESDAY A.M. REGARDS NORTON

When I finally got her home, and said good night at the elevators, and went around to the Fremont, where I lived, and got to my apartment, I hit the roof. I cussed, I raved, I stomped around, till the desk rang up to know if there was something wrong. Then I tried liquor and that didn't work. Finally I went to bed, but don't get the idea I went to sleep. Norton is president of the company and Keyes is head of the claim department, a bird we got not long ago from another of the Norton group of companies, and there was no claim on the Delavan policy yet but he gets called in on all kinds of stuff that the underwriters don't know what to do about, and without hearing any more about it this meant trouble. With Keyes in it it would be just plain agony, because if there was any twisted, cock-eyed, queer angle that could be found on it, he'd turn it up, and about two dozen of his own that nobody else could find in it, but that he had to see just to show what a genius he was at it.

3

I HADN'T seen him since two or three cases he'd had that had got a lot of space in the newspapers, and while I had heard about the way he was playing up to it, and the reporters at the airport should have tipped me off, I wasn't quite ready for what came off the plane. In the first place, he had lost about fifty pounds, because while he wasn't exactly a slim, slanky cowboy type even now, he was rightdown beautiful compared with the Berkshire hog type he had been before. In the second place, the clothes he wore, from the down-on-one-side hat to the tailormade suit, were just like what a picture actor wears on a personal appearance tour. And in the third place, he had that look in his eye that says camera. He saw me and waved, and then looked surprised as anything at the reporters at the gate, though how they would be there if somebody hadn't tipped them off, I couldn't quite figure out. He stood twenty minutes being interviewed, on the political situation, the business outlook, and the crime wave, which all hands seemed to know about, though it was the first I'd heard there was one. Then I drove him to the Washoe-Truckee, where I had tried to get him a de luxe suite, but there weren't any, so they gave him a nice single on the east side of the hotel and we walked over to my office. I sat him behind my desk, put the Delavan folder in front of him, went out to see some prospects, and told Linda I'd ring in from time to time to see if he was ready to talk. So when I got back around five it turned out his idea of when to talk was that night after dinner. I had to call Mrs. Delavan and break my date. "I'm sorry, but there's a shot here from the home office and there's nothing much I can do."

"Well, Mr. Horner, does it really matter?"

"It does to me."

"Then maybe you've forgotten something."

"Which is?"

"The gambling houses never close—why not—why not, *Ed?*"

"Say, say, say."

"Put him bidey-bye and ring Jingle-Janey."

After dinner I took him to a picture, and around eleven there didn't seem to be any place he could go but bed. So I took him to the hotel. I waved as he went up in the car, and he was hardly out of sight when I dived for the house phone.

* * *

"But, Ed, who's the shot?"

"Just head of the claim department."

"Anything wrong?"

"No. Why?"

"You seem greatly preoccupied."

"Preoccupied with color."

She had on slacks and a mink coat, with red bag, red shoes, and a red ribbon around her hair, and the way I told it, it had given me the idea for a whole new system based on betting the red. It cost me $18 before we switched to something that made sense, but she thought it was hot stuff and forgot about everything else. But then, as we took a drift over to some new place to change our luck, my heart stood still because there at a chuck-a-luck game stood Keyes. I pulled her back on the street.

"But what—?"

"The shot from the home office."

"Well?"

"Jane, I'd rather he didn't see me."

"Doing exactly what he's doing?"

"He's on a trip, and if he makes it a toot, well—they all do. But me, I'm home, and if it looks like I did it every night, that's different."

We started down the street, her hand on my arm, as it generally was now, but her head was down, like she was thinking. And pretty soon she said: "I have the queerest feeling."

"About the red? It's no good."

"About the shot from the home office. I keep thinking it's not the roulette you don't want him to see, but me."

"That's ridiculous."

"It would certainly seem so, and yet—"

After awhile she stopped and faced me. "Now I've got it. . . . The insurance deal is still on, isn't it?"

"Listen, I bring home cups."

"And this man's investigating, isn't he?"

"He might be."

"Will you send him to me?"

"What for?"

"I might block this insurance."

"This is not a guy I can send places, to you or anybody. This is Mr. Keyes, that regards himself as a national celebrity, and maybe he takes my advice, and maybe he doesn't. And anyway, I've got enough trouble with him already without fixing it up for you to make me a little more."

"To you this is just insurance, isn't it?"

"That's all."

"And human questions, they don't matter?"

"Yeah, Jane, but what's insurance got to do with it?"

"Everything."

"That's no answer. Give."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I'd involve other people."

"Like who?"

"I can't discuss it with you."

"Then the deal's on."

We went on a little way, then she stopped and right under the bright lights on Virginia Street she took my two coat lapels in her hands. "Ed, can't you take what I say on faith?"

"Afraid not."

"Would I be one to imagine things?"

"I wouldn't say so."

"Then why won't you believe me?"

"You really want to know?"

"You know I do."

"The No. 5 cup."

I told her about the five-star cluster, and all the rest of it. Her eyes got wet, so they glittered. "But that's so childish."

"So's everything."

"But terrible things are at stake."

"What are they?"

"If this wasn't so serious it would be funny."

She put her arms around me, there in front of the hotel, and kissed me, warm and full, the first time she ever had. "You like me a lot, Ed, or so you said."

"I think I'm in love with you."

"I think you are too."

"Jane, are *you* in love with *me?*"

"I'm suffering from a badly bruised heart, and you can't forget everything and be in love at the drop of a hat. But I'm happy when I'm with you, so I guess it's not far off. Now, because you love me, will you drop this whole thing simply because I ask it and tell Tom he can't have his insurance? There's a reason for that. When he finds he can't get insurance he'll be so frightened he'll drop this whole thing he intends to do to me. You see, Tom's whole trouble is he can never take anything seriously. Whether it's marriage, polo, or work, such little work as he does, it's always the same. He makes a game of it. He even has to make a game out of ending his marriage. But if he's a child about such things, he's also a child in his unusual capacity to feel fear. This will scare him to death, and end the whole farce. Promise me, and then we'll go up to my nice little suite and make coffee and you can work on the $64 question: What have you got that makes me want to run my fingers through your hair?"

I didn't promise, but I kissed her, and I can kid myself all I please, but I know now, and I knew then, that she took it as a promise. Well, why did I go up with her, have coffee, spend one of those romantic hours, and not bring the thing up any more,

to make it all clear, how I stood? I think I've told you, an agent thinks he's doing anybody a swell turn to get a policy written for them, whether it's for one year or twenty. And by that time, I had come to the conclusion that whatever it was she meant by all the fuss she was kicking up, it didn't amount to much, or wouldn't, once she combed Delavan out of her hair. On top of that, I'll admit it, I wanted the cup, but I could see no reason, no reason that made any sense at all, why I couldn't have the cup and her too, or at least have a wonderful time with her, and the works later, with orange blossoms, if that's how it turned out. Then O.K., O.K., I'll say it again:

I wanted that cup.

* * *

And, believe it or not, I told Keyes what had been said, when he came to the office next morning after talking with Delavan. So far, I had told him nothing about her. But the way I did it, like leaving out her asking me to promise, was proof that down deep in me I wasn't really telling all I knew, I was just going through the motions. I kept saying to myself it was "personal," whatever that meant, and nobody's business but my own. He hardly heard me. "I don't see anything to this but a playboy that's come into an unexpected piece of change and has figured a way to pretend to himself he's going to do something pretty nice for her to square up for giving her a dirty deal on the annulment."

"That's how I see it."

"And there might be a blow-hard angle."

"In what way, Mr. Keyes?"

"In his clubs, or wherever he hangs out. It's around, don't worry, how little she's getting, because he even admits it isn't enough. But if he can toss it off about the 'six-figure insurance deal' that was put on top of it, that'll get around too. Once it's around, what does he care? He's taken care of his name, and at the end of a year he can quit worrying. As he says, she'll

probably be married anyway. He's probably patting himself on the back, what a noble guy he is. And there may be a tax angle we don't know about."

"You don't seem to believe much in nobility."

"In a word, no."

"What do you make of her, Mr. Keyes?"

"Well, who *would* want this annulment?"

"Yeah, but what's blocking the insurance got to do with it?"

"It's not so dumb, once you meet the guy. She probably figures that if you take away his chance to look noble, the rest of it'll be so raw that even he won't have the gall to go through with it. Ed, he's a silly guy. She knows him. She's got her reasons. Of course, if there was somebody around that would plug him for what he's doing, that would be different. Fortunately, we can eliminate that."

"Oh, can we?"

"Well, you wouldn't, would you?"

"What have I got to do with it?"

"Well, you're going around with her."

"On business, a little."

"Like a little necking in front of the hotel?"

"Says who?"

"I saw you. . . . She was such a pretty girl I stopped at the desk and asked who she was. I think it can be assumed if she's having hot smackeroos with you, she's not having them with somebody else. He won't get shot, in my humble opinion."

"This all came after his application was in."

"It's O.K. with me."

"I'm kind of stuck on her."

"I don't fall for them as a rule. I've got a superstition about it. Somehow, I feel that's all it would need, for me to fall for one, and here it would come, all ready-made from up yonder, a chapter at a time. Stories are wonderful things—but from the outside looking in, Ed, every time. From the inside looking out, not so good."

It crossed my mind, driving out to see one of the Count's

lessons in manners, could I be on the inside of something, looking out, and not know it?

* * *

Keyes had got the company to make it a rule that anything in six figures gets a special check, whether there's anything questionable or not, so that meant he had to sit around till he got his report from New York. That meant I'd have to entertain him, but there was no help for it, so I rang her and said I'd meet her later. Around five o'clock he rang me at the office, and from the way he stuttered I began to wonder what *he* wanted. "Listen, Mr. Keyes, is there something else *you'd* rather do?"

"Oh, not at all, but—"

"Spill it."

"There's somebody I'd like to invite."

"Hey, hey, hey. And ho, ho, ho. And ha, ha, ha."

"Oh, it's nothing like that. She's married and rich and wants nothing from me. Just the same, she's a pretty good looker, and I thought—"

"Who is she?"

"Nobody you know. She's from Bermuda."

"If she's getting it melted, watch out."

"No. She's here on business—cashing chips."

"She won't be rich long."

"She can afford it."

"She's all yours."

"Couldn't we invite—your little friend, Ed?"

"I don't think she'd go for it."

"Ed, can I say something?"

"Shoot!"

"Personal?"

"O.K."

"Watch out."

"Well, the same to you and many of them."

"Don't worry about me, my young friend. But you, you could be starting something you can't stop."

* * *

That night I took Jane over to Carson, and she loved it, because it's the tiniest state capital in the world, and she said it was like tiptoeing around in some doll's house. After we had dinner at the Arlington we started up the Bridgeport Road, because over the California line, in the high country where there's real forest, you often see deer and other big game, and she thought she would like that. She was feeling good, and before long I found out why. "I think my difficulty's near an end. I think my problem is going to be solved, and soon. I think it'll all get straightened out before I, or Tom, complete our six weeks' period of residence."

"Gee, that's swell."

"In town has arrived a lady."

"You interest me strangely."

"The present wife of my former husband."

"To get Tom to lay off the annulment?"

"I can imagine no other reason."

"Who is your former husband, by the way?"

"Richard Sperry."

"I never heard of him."

"He was well enough known when I married him. His scientific standing as a petroleum expert is good and solid. Backed up by her money, though, he's become internationally eminent. And I imagine her money will tell the story here."

"You mean—she'll offer Tom?"

"I think so."

"And Tom will take it?"

She talked along about society people, and what they will do for money, or even free booze, like indorse this, that, or the other brand of whiskey, and I got the idea friend Tom could be had, and maybe cheap. We saw a deer and a pair of eyes

we decided was a puma, though if you ask me, most of those pumas along the road would yip like coyotes if you coaxed them with a rock. She took my hand and patted it. "Yes, I think we can assume that little Connie didn't come all the way from Bermuda, as much money as *she* has, just to say please."

". . . Your husband live in Bermuda?"

"Didn't I say? He's a geologist for the oil companies."

"Didn't know Bermuda had any oil."

"Bermuda's his base. You *can't* live in Venezuela. It's too hot, and they've got malaria."

"How'd she find out about this annulment?"

"Through the frizzle-haired simpleton."

"His fiancee?"

"Who's reached the bragging stage now."

"Would her bragging reach Bermuda?"

"It's practically a suburb of New York."

"She certainly got here quick."

"What's the matter, Ed?"

"Nothing."

"Have I upset you, talking about Dick?"

"Not at all."

"Well, something's eating on you."

"I said nothing's the matter."

We drove to the hotel, but Bermuda, the policy, and the pass at Keyes certainly seemed more than coincidence.

4

THEY SAY a zebra, as long as he can see the lion, goes on grazing without getting too much excited about it. But when he can't see him, and can only hear him, and has no idea where the sound is coming from, he gets so nervous he can't eat, can't run, and can't stand still. I was that way about Keyes. When he didn't come in next day and he didn't call, I stood it until noon, but by that time I had to find out what he was doing. I drove over to the hotel, and he was in the barber shop. The barber was working on his head, the shine boy on his feet, and the manicure girl on his paws. When I went bug-eyed he acted like nothing had happened, though you could tell from the way Marguerite had to cue him that he'd never had a manicure in his life, and I wouldn't bet much he'd ever had a shine.

In the lobby, when the production job was done, so he shone and squeaked and smelled, he propositioned me about my car. "As there's absolutely nothing I can do until I hear from New York, I'd kind of like to drive Mrs. Sperry around, and if you could accommodate me—"

"It's yours. Here's the key."

"But if you need it I can rent one."

"You? In a U-Drive jalopy?"

"Oh, I drive."

"But you're so valuable to the company."

"I guess that's right."

He was pretty solemn about it, and I dead-panned, though I kind of liked the gag, and I filed it away so in case I had to make a speech at a company banquet I'd have something to tell the boys. Pretty soon he said: "She knows the country and is going to show me a lot of things, like the old mines in Goldfield

and Tonopah and Virginia City—those are ghost towns, aren't they?"

"They were, till fires burned the ghostly garments up."

"Extraordinary woman, Ed. Wonderful mind. I was telling her about this problem of ours."

"Yeah? I'm a little surprised."

"Oh, I mentioned no names."

"Then of course that makes it different."

"She thinks, as I do, that on big things, you instinctively know what you think, with no evidential substantiation. Beautiful phrase, Ed."

"Here we call it playing a hunch."

"Her mind constantly parallels mine."

"Or yesses it."

". . . What did you say?"

"I said what does she think of our problem?"

"Just what we think. She was wondering if she had any capacity for this clairvoyance of mine, as she calls it, and I laid it all out for her. She said, 'Well, it would be terribly exciting if I could feel something steal up and touch me on the shoulder, but I don't. All I see is a somewhat pathetic boy trying to make himself look big in a cheap, silly way.' "

"That makes three of us."

"Got to run, Ed. Mrs. Sperry is waiting."

"To say nothing of the former Mrs. Sperry."

"Who?"

"Jane, waiting for me."

"Mrs. Delavan was the former Mrs. Sperry?"

"Now you got it."

He sat there a long time, sometimes asking me questions about who these people were, and I could see his mind racing up one part of it and down the other, putting everything together, checking what he had said to La Sperry, what she had said to him, and so on. Then he said: "It's none of my business what she's here for, is it, Ed?"

"That I couldn't say."
"And none of hers, what I'm here for."
"That I couldn't say either."
"You know how I dope it out?"
"No, but I'd like to."
"She had no idea what I was telling her."
"What do you mean, telling her?"
"About Delavan's policy."
"Had no idea who you were talking about?"
"I never reject a *simple* explanation. Ed."
"That explanation, I'd say, verges on the simple-minded. If you think, after what you told her, she had no idea who you were talking about—that is, if you told her all about the coal company, the—"
"Ouch, I forgot that."
"It's not possible she didn't guess. . . . Mr. Keyes, if you told her about it, as you say, it wasn't up to her to tip it she knew who you were talking about if she didn't want to. Maybe she's a well-mannered dame that doesn't tip things because she was brought up not to. But that's not all. You didn't only tell her. She pumped it out of you. She—"
"No, no, Ed. Nobody could. Not out of me."
"O.K. You're a clam."
He sat another ten minutes thinking. "But what *interest* could she have? What could it mean to her whether Delavan gets his insurance or didn't? She hasn't tried to influence me in any way."
"She's here to block that annulment."
"O.K., now we're getting somewhere."
"Just where?"
"If she's here to block the annulment, by whatever suasion she cares to use—"
"On checks."
"You mean she'll *bribe* Delavan?"
"Why, Mr. Keyes, such language!"

"It's what you mean, isn't it?"

"You think he's too refined to accept?"

I took him out to where the car was parked, and he stood beside it, thinking some more. "I think we've got it, Ed. Mrs. Delavan got that thing they use all over the British Empire, one of those cut-and-dried, found-him-with-an-unknown-woman, in-and-out-in-ten minutes divorces, and they're perfectly good—so long as everybody plays ball. But God help you if somebody kicks the beans in the fire. An English court will reopen the case sure as God made little apples, and remember, if they wanted to call it on them, this would involve perjury, contempt of court, manufacture of evidence, collusion, everything that mocks the dignity of the court, and that it can't have publicly proved. Delavan thinks he'll kick over the beans. Mrs. Sperry has other ideas, because she doesn't propose to have her marriage ruined by a playboy's caprice. So far as I'm concerned, that accounts for everything, her trip here, all of it."

I made sure he knew where the starter was and went off and left him. Why I had talked so tough I don't know, as the hand as it was dealt said I ought to have talked the other way. But somehow, even if it is against your own interest, you can blow your top a little when you see a guy kidding himself and shutting his eyes to what he ought to be seeing. Because, tough talk or not, ramming the probe in, pretending to go into it from the company angle or however I played it, there was stuff going on here I didn't understand, and my stomach was telling me it was no good.

* * *

Going into the week-end it was high, wide and handsome, with Jane and me out with the horses most of the time, and he running the roads with Mrs. Sperry. But when he brought her in Saturday morning, to pick up tickets for the football game over at the University, I didn't exactly like her, but I could see

what he'd fallen for. She was a little older than Jane, maybe a little under thirty, small and stocky, but not fat. But in the blue dress with white spots on it that she was wearing, with tan shoes, hat and bag and fur coat, you could hardly miss that trim, pretty shape, with nice legs that reminded you somehow of a cat. Or maybe it was her eyes that did that. Her face was round, with puffy, dimpled cheeks, rosebud mouth and small, perky nose and light hair; but her eyes were the diamond shape you see in a leopard, and light gray.

But she didn't look like anybody else, you had to say that for her, and when she smiled at me and clucked over the cups and made herself friendly with Linda, you couldn't exactly kick her in the teeth. She made my skin prickle a little, and yet I'm human and it wasn't just to be nice to Keyes that I put myself out for her. After some talk about the football game she said: "I hear you see little Jane Delavan."

"Yes, we ride a little."

"Lovely girl."

". . . You know her?"

"Well—that would be a little complicated. But I've seen her and heard a lot about her—and I know a lot of people that she knows."

"Shall I remember you to her?"

"I think it would please her that I spoke pleasantly of her. But if you mention it, don't say anything as coming from me."

"O.K."

But how I was going to do it at all was what worried me, because to mention it would mean I would have to mention what Keyes had to do with it, and what was he doing here all this time? But I could have saved myself the trouble of thinking about it, because by dinner Jane already had it. "Ed, I ask you once more what that man is doing here."

"He has business."

"And what's he doing with her?"

"Maybe he likes her."

"What's she doing with him?"
"Vice versa, maybe."
"With her, that's not enough."
"Then maybe she wants a good time."
"Ed, have you kept your promise to me?"
I said I never broke my promises, which sounded a little better than it was.

* * *

I'm a member of Unity, and next morning, when service was over at the Masonic Temple, I stepped over to the hotel to see how she felt on the subject of lunch. But Keyes was in the lobby, slumped down in his chair, and when he saw me he jumped up and came over almost at a trot. "Ed, I've got to talk to you. I've been trying to reach you all morning, and—I've got to talk."
"O.K.—talk."
"Not here. I'm not myself."
We went up to his room and first he sat on the bed, then he lay on it. Then he got an envelope out of his pocket, opened it, took out a paper and said: "Read that."
It was one of our operative's reports, and from the first page, where "subject" went to a football game, it was easy to see that who was under surveillance was Mrs. Sperry. "So you got pretty stuck on her, but not so stuck you didn't have her shadowed."
"No, Ed, that's not how it was at all."
"Looks like it."
"The whole thing was routine. I put the case in charge of our Department of Investigation, down in Los Angeles. I told them to take the whole thing over. How did I know they'd decide to include her in their check-up? I'd never even heard of her when I left to come up here. But—and the worst of it is the operative doesn't even know who I am."
I read it, and right near the end it went something like this:

11:05 P.M. Subject returned to hotel, entered Suite 642 with Robert Keyes.
11:08 P.M. Keyes left subject's suite.
11:14 P.M. Phone rang in subject's suite, subject answered, conversation inaudible.
11:15 P.M. Subject admitted man to her room. Identity undiscovered so far. Description:

Age: 30-35.
Height: About six feet.
Weight: Around 160.
Hair: Black, slightly gray.
Good build, well-dressed.

At 12:00 P.M. this man had not come out. I put wedges cut from three paper matches in crack between door and frame, using point of penknife to work them into place in such way they would fall unnoticed if door was opened. Went off duty.
Sunday:

9:30 A.M. Wedges still in place.

"Well, Mr. Keyes, she crossed you."
"But why?"
"Maybe she likes him."
"I thought she liked me. I—worshipped her."
"Being married to one guy, playing around with another, carrying on with still another—it's done every day, except mostly they don't have a private eye down the hall wearing a porter's blouse."
"And I thought she was a lady—a thoroughbred."
"Oh, ladies play, but they don't get caught."
"It's a horrible shock to me."
"Don't say you weren't warned."
"Warned? By whom? Who *dared* warn me?"
"Me. Remember my saying—watch out?"
"That was a gag."

"Or so you thought."
"All right, Ed, you warned me."

* * *

When I went to Jane's suite, she was in a worse state, if that was possible, than Keyes was. "Ed, something horrible has happened."
"O.K., let's have it."
"Dick's in town."
"Sperry?"
"He's here to kill Tom."
". . . You mean bump him off? Like that?"
"Just like that."
"Nice guy."
"Oh, yes. Once he tried to kill me."
"Kind of a Bluebeard type, I'd say."
"Don't talk like that. . . . Dick has spent too many years of his life in places where human life is very cheap, and where assassination is one of the regular ways to accomplish an end, and the cheapest. I—I tell you, we went swimming, and suddenly I knew I was not coming back."
"How?"
"I don't know."
"Well—!"
"Oh, later on it was proved. He knew I knew."
"So?"
"I screamed."
"Loud?"
"I said my foot had touched something."
"And?"
"I said it was rough, like sandpaper."
"Oh, like a shark maybe."
"And that was something even Mr. Sperry couldn't face. He tried to pooh pooh it, but I screamed again, and he cut for shore."

"Well, there's no ocean here, or sharks."

"Ed, please listen to me. I've tried to tell Tom if he persisted in this thing, this annulment, that Dick would have to do something about it. I told him what I've just told you. I told him Dick was like that, that rather than have this thing happen he would kill him. His answer was to go to you about insurance. To prove he thought it simply silly he looked up an agent in the phone book and went over to your office. Well, thank heaven I warned you in time, and that part is out. That silly gesture he made, to prove I was just dreaming things up, and that even seemed silly to him, when I told him his application would be disapproved. You're protected, but he's not. We've got to think of some way to block this off."

"And with him gone I could marry you."

I guess it was a gag, but before she could answer the phone rang in the bedroom. She dived in there, and when she came back her eyes were shining. "Thank the all-merciful God! That was Tom. He's given up the annulment action."

"Well, that just about fixes everything."

"I hadn't counted on Dick going to see him."

"Turned on the heat, hey?"

"At last Tom knew what I had been trying to tell him. Oh, I know how Dick looked when he came for that little chat. You wouldn't think those quiet, scientific eyes could get that killer look in them, but they can, all right."

"Then let's celebrate."

"Oh, yes!"

"Little trip to Tahoe?"

"I'd love it."

So we had the hotel fix us some lunch and drove up to Tahoe and ate it in the woods, sitting on a rock beside the lake. But before we went I called on Keyes in his room. "News, chum."

". . . What is it, Ed?"

"That guy, last night, was her husband."

He had flopped back on the bed as soon as he let me in, but now he jumped up and grabbed the phone. When the operator

told him that yes, Mr. Richard Sperry was registered, I thought his grin would come together at the back of his neck and take off the top of his head. "Ed, you can't know what you've done for me."

"Oh, ye of little faith."

"That thoroughbred, and I suspected her!"

"And the annulment suit's out."

"I bet you're pleased."

"Somewhat."

"Pretty day, isn't it, Ed?"

"That old Nevada air."

Part Two:

DISHONORABLE INTENTIONS

5

OF COURSE it didn't quite run straight down Hotsy Totsy Drive, not with Keyes around it couldn't. Next day, when the New York wire cleared everything he called Delavan from my office to tell him it was O.K. Then he began to stall, and then he hung up. And then, after studying the wire some more, he said: "Ed, I think I'm disapproving this risk."

"And why, if I may ask?"

"Concealment."

"Of what?"

"I don't know. But he was surprised."

"At you okaying something?"

"I told him I'd heard from New York, that his application was approved, and he was surprised. He thought it wouldn't be, and there's nothing he's told me or I've told him that should make him think it wouldn't be. That means there's something he expected me to find out. I've got to know what that is."

Now I know why he was surprised. After Jane had told him his application would be disapproved, to be told five days later that it had been passed was enough to surprise anybody. But what I had told her and what she had told him I regarded as completely outside the scope of a company investigation, and if Delavan still wanted to accept his insurance I didn't mean to be blocked off from my cup on some crazy hunch by a guy trying to find stuff that would make headlines in the newspapers. I just calmly got up and walked into the outer office and told Linda to get Mr. Norton on the telephone. Norton's pres-

ident of the company. He's not quite the man his father was, that founded our company and a couple of other companies and built them up and formulated most of the policies we've got, but he's a nice guy just the same and what I wasn't forgetting in any way, he was a little fed up with Keyes. I spoke to Linda good and loud, so Keyes heard me. When I came back we just sat there, he smoking his cigar and thinking. I smoking mine and burning.

* * *

"Mr. Norton?"

"Hello, Horner, what's on your mind?"

I gave him enough of it, even if it was a long distance call, for him to get what it was about. "Now, Mr. Norton, I've got some cups on my bookcase that say I'm one of the best agents you've got. I've got my eye on another, maybe you know about that. But here's something that maybe you don't know. I've got three letters in front of me, three letters as yet unanswered, from other companies, offering me territory, with general agent rank, in cities a lot bigger than Reno, cities that—"

"Now, Horner!"

"Could mean, to me—"

"Will you let me talk? If you'll meet that afternoon plane, I'll have somebody aboard that I think can straighten things out. Now just take it easy. Play some golf. And let me talk to Keyes."

Keyes hated it, but he had to stand there and say "Yes, sir" every ten seconds, and when he hung up his face was so red it looked like a Technicolor gag. Then he put on his coat and went out.

* * *

I expected H. P. Davis, senior vice-president, or maybe Vic Rose, chief of underwriters, but I almost fell over backwards

when Norton himself came down the ladder. Oh yes, he did. An insurance company puts first things first, and it knows what the first things are. What brings in its business is agents, and when one of them blows his top even the President's not too proud to jump on a plane. He was just like any other guy as I drove him in, and we went direct to my office, as he was taking the sleeper back and wouldn't need a room at the hotel. "What do they call you, Horner—Ed?"

"My friends do, yes."

"And my name is Jason—Jace if you like me."

"I'd feel funny about that."

"Oh, this is the West."

"Yeah, but a corporation president, he ought not to have people getting familiar. J.P., though, I'd like that all right."

Well, that made him laugh, so by the time we hit town we were getting along fine. Keyes was there when we came in, looking pretty thick, but we went all over it, and then Norton took charge: "Keyes, you knew my father pretty well?"

"Better than you did, perhaps."

"On insurance, I'm sure you did. But I knew him too, and on questions like this, I've heard him say a thousand times: 'Insurance is the assumption of risk. Pig-iron under water is a perfect risk, but nobody takes out a policy on it. That's what the underwriter must always bear in mind: if the applicant weren't in some way uneasy, he'd never buy insurance. The risk must be there for the surety to be sought and the mere presence of risk is not in itself sufficient reason for rejection of the business.' Do you recall his saying that?"

"No."

"I do, distinctly."

"He never said it."

"He said it forty times a day for forty years."

"What he said was: 'Insurance is the assumption of a calculated risk.' He was, as you probably recall, opposed to conservatism in the acceptance of business. He accepted business that most companies turned down, but it was in no way a gamble

with him, except as all of it is a gamble. He brought the calculation of a risk to a science that was way ahead of his time, with a department of investigation that brought in stuff that hadn't even been heard of then. Yet the ratio of his losses was as sound as any in the business. *I'll recommend no risk I can't calculate, and in this case there is concealment.* There is concealment on the part of the beneficiary, of the assured, and I think on the part of the agent."

I flared up but Norton cut me off: "Ed, what is this?"

"I'm stuck on the beneficiary, J. P."

"Mrs. Delavan?"

"I'm going to marry her."

"Is that the matter that's been concealed?"

"No, I wouldn't say so. The main item of concealment is that Mr. Keyes is stuck on the wife of the lady's first husband, but she's *not* going to marry him—and that's what this is all about, though what romance has got to do with the calculation of risk I don't exactly see—though I'm willing to be shown."

I guess it was a dirty crack at Keyes, but I was pretty sore. Norton's mouth began to twitch and I could see he was having a hard time not to laugh. Keyes talked some more, and the trouble with him was that when he got that look in his eye, and told all the times before that he had been right when he smelled something wrong without even knowing what it was yet, he'd shake you, in spite of yourself. Away down deep in me, if I'd told the truth, he shook me, but I was getting bull-headed by then and nothing could change me. He shook Norton, I could see that, for a while we all three sat there, drumming our fingers on our chairs. I called to Linda to put through my New York call. It was the apartment of a big shot in a company that wanted me bad, and he was standing by, because I'd wired him to. Pretty soon it came through, but it was Norton that picked up the receiver. "He's changed his mind, Linda. Doesn't want the New York call."

* * *

I took them to the Palm Room of the Club Fortune, but at eight Norton had to run for his train. He thought it funny Keyes didn't go with him, and as I put him in his cab he asked if there was a little resentment around. "Romance, J. P. has to say goodbye."

"Say, who *is* the dame?"

"A Mrs. Sperry, I believe her name is."

"Not *Constance?*"

"You know her?"

"Boy, is that a twenty-minute egg!"

"Well, Keyes is carrying it in his Easter basket."

"Ed, you don't know how funny this is. Before she married this Englishman, there were at least six guys that thought they'd grab that fortune, but even they couldn't take it. And now Keyes, the guy that can't be fooled, is plunking a guitar under her window—say, that's a real joke."

* * *

When I got back inside, Keyes had kind of forgotten to be a celebrity for a while, and there seemed to be something on his mind. After a while he said: "Ed, do you think it would be proper for me to call on Mrs. Sperry before I leave, just to say goodbye?"

"Well, why not?"

"You think it would embarrass her?"

"Well, that all depends."

"On what?"

"On what she's told the husband."

"I don't quite understand you, Ed."

"Well, on this earth we got all kinds. Some play around and figure they owe it to themselves on account of how short a time we have here anyhow, and they keep their mouths shut and it sounds wonderful but they've got a way of figuring what they owe themselves is nothing compared to what you owe them, so it's not really quite as wonderful as it sounds. And then

there's others that play around, and they figure it's right down sinful of them but they can't help it on account of how wonderful you are, but you better watch them because they've got an unfortunate habit of getting remorse and telling friend husband all, just to square everything up and start over again, and I hear it works but going around to say goodbye depends mainly on the husband. Maybe he wants to shake hands, but on the other hand maybe he's got a Colt automatic and just aching to use it. Personally, if you ask me, I'd kind of give her a ring and see how things stand before I came in range, like you might say."

He sat there with a spoonful of coffee halfway up to his mouth, staring at me like I must be crazy or something. "But, Ed, you don't mean you think there's anything between her and me to tell, do you?"

"You mean you didn't make passes?"

"I wouldn't have thought of it."

"Maybe you missed something."

"Do you mean to make insinuations about her?"

"Hey, hey, hey, be your age."

"But Ed—about *that* woman?"

Well, how do you tell a guy you think his lady friend would go for an insult right on the lipstick? "I was kidding you, Keyes. Just seeing if you could take a rib."

"I'm glad to know it, Ed."

But even with all that said between us, he still wanted to talk, and he opened up about how he thinks he got himself more emotionally involved with her than he had realized, and how he'd hate to leave town without going to see her, because he's pretty sure she feels the same way. Then his face got red again, the way it had in the afternoon, and he kept saying over and over again she was a woman a man could love and not be ashamed of it, and then all of a sudden he was looking over my shoulder at something over near the door. I turned around, and Mrs. Sperry was just coming in with a short, stocky man, and she waved when she saw us. I gave Keyes kind of a kick

on his shoe, so he wouldn't look so glum. "It's all right to be in love, but why advertise it?"

"Is he her husband?"

I had the captain do some sleuthing and he came back and said the gentleman was Mr. Richard Sperry. Keyes got glummer, then said: "Look at this."

It was the same old report from the fellow assigned to keep track of her, and he read it again, the description of the man that went into her room and didn't come out: " 'Age, 30-35, height around six feet, weight around 160, hair black with some gray.' Ed, that man's job depends on getting it right. Sperry over there is at least fifty, he's not an inch over five feet eight, he can't weigh over 140, and his hair is light red."

"Probably some simple explanation."

"Let's get out of here."

* * *

I rang Jane and told her I was hooked for the evening, but if I could make it later I'd call her. He and I went over to the hotel, and he said he'd be right down and went upstairs. He was gone quite a while, brushing himself up, he said, and then wanted me to drive him around, so he could think. I took him over into California on the road to Sacramento, and it goes over the Sierras but if it slammed him around a little I didn't really mind. He lit a cigar, then threw it out the window, right in a fire zone. Then he pulled his legs up under him and sat with his heels kind of jammed over against me. So of course that made it nice, trying to drive. He wound down his window, stuck his elbow out, and leaned his chin on it. So of course that made it still better, with a draft blowing down my neck. Then he began clenching and unclenching his left hand, so it rubbed my brake leg. "Cut it out, will you, Keyes? How can I drive with—"

"Quit bothering me."

"Then suppose it wasn't her husband last night?"

"Ed, I'm trying to think."

Sore as I was, the way he rapped it out I didn't have much more to say. I took a peep at him, and something in the way he was staring at those tall trees going by let me see it, just once, whatever it was he had in him that made him the greatest wolf on a phony claim west of the Mississippi River, and maybe the greatest in the business. He wasn't sore, or squint-eyed, or whatever you'd think he would be, trying to dope this out. He was just like a child that asked his mother why something made a noise like it did, and when he got an answer that didn't make sense, he was trying to fit it together. That hurt little frown, with 1,000,000 watts of concentration back of it, was something I've often thought of since. After a while he put down his feet, wound up his window, and said: "Well, I've thought of one angle anyway. Thank God you haven't delivered that policy."

"How do you know what I've done?"

"Don't tell me she's got it?"

"While you were taking your own sweet time brushing up, and considering that when Norton left this was supposed to be signed, sealed and settled, it's highly possible I slipped upstairs on the elevator and handed it to her, just to cheer her up. That could be. A lot of things could be. It would help a lot if you'd disconnect that assumer of yours and stop taking for granted what I do. I'm not under your orders, remember that."

I was pretty disagreeable, and he raved and tore his hair and hooked it up big. I let him run on, maybe encouraged him a little. Of course, I hadn't delivered any policy. I hadn't had a chance for one thing, and I had to figure on it for another thing, what I'd say to her about it. Before the three of us had left the office Norton had O.K.'d it for Linda to deposit Delavan's check, and she'd mailed it out with two or three others, her final job every night, or most nights anyway, as there weren't many days we didn't handle payments. Once we took the money, the policy was legally in force, which was one thing that gave me a pain in the neck about all this delivery stuff Keyes was handing out, because short of a trip to the post office

in the middle of the night, and another at daybreak to get the check back, there was no way to stop the thing now. That all-night run-around I wasn't for one second going to start, because all this needed was one more hang-up, and it could land in the soup. At that time, I have to admit, that while I thought I was doing Jane a favor, as I've said, the real thing on my mind was the cup and that $100,000 tilt on my company score. It may have been childish, but in my experience the more childish something is the stubborner you get about it. All this so you get it straight about that policy, and the sweats I went through over it later. I'll try to make clear why I handled it like I did, and I think I'll make sense, but how it stood then, on that ride back from the mountains, was like this: I had it, right in my office safe. It was paid for, and legally we were on the hook. But Keyes supposed, maybe because I deliberately misled him a little, that Jane had it.

* * *

He sulked then, and I turned around, and we started back. As we were coming in to Truckee he started up again. "Here, we've got a question of identity. What confused this, from the beginning, was that it was Delavan *himself* who applied for the policy, or appeared to. That made it O.K., even if his reasons were a little screwy, but we're in that kind of business, and if we ever saw a perfect risk, they wouldn't be wanting insurance —old man Norton's pig-iron again. It won't burn down, or fall on somebody, or steal the payroll, or collide with a truck, or blow away, or get hit by lightning, but who wants a policy on it? So all right. But there was one fishy thing about it? *She* opposed the idea. Ed, did you ever see a beneficiary, especially a wife, oppose insurance to mean it? I'm not talking about a little act she puts on. I'm not talking about when she says she can't even bear to think about it, all that stuff. That looks good to the husband, but did she ever turn down a check when the agent takes it around? Not her, my young friend. Once she

hears those words, 'Till death do us part,' she's a solid prospect, and when she really goes to town on the other side of the fence, like this girl did, something cooks."

"It does, and I told you what it was."

"Ed, who says that was Delavan?"

What I said to him was nothing, because I'd had hunches about this thing too, as I think I told you. But he didn't wait long. He went right on: "Ask that one question, and it all makes sense. Delavan's in town, I've no doubt of that. He's here, and any question of where he's staying and all the rest of it's all taken care of. He's here for an annulment, and she's in the soup, and he's going to get killed, and all papers on the corpse are going to check up, because it's really going to be Delavan that gets it. But how are we going to prove Delavan's not the man that bought the policy?"

"Can't we appear at the inquest, have a look at the corpse, and testify that he's not?"

"What'll that corpse look like?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"But I'm asking you—after, say, an auto accident?"

"Like hamburger, I guess."

"They'll laugh at us, testifying whether it's the guy that bought the policy or who it is. It's six-figure dough to us, and well they know it, and how much our testimony will be worth is exactly nothing at all, especially since even his own mother wouldn't know him."

"However, he's not dead yet."

"He will be. You remember Mrs. Peete?"

"Who?"

"California case. Killed a couple of people."

"Oh, I remember. Kind of got the habit."

"And when she was sentenced to die, she said a peculiar thing to the reporters. She said: 'It is given to all to know the day they were born, but to very few the day they're going to die.' Funny idea, that was, Ed. Kind of reminds you how seldom that moving finger gives out an advance copy of what

it's going to write. Well, we've got one. Here we are, two guys in a car, and we know a man named Delavan is due to get it, that a woman is due to collect $100,000 insurance off us, that then she's going to run off with a guy that's been pretending to be the husband, and that we'll have one sweet time finding."

"Listen, Keyes, if your sweetie's been two-timing you that's unfortunate, but don't take it out on me. Or on Delavan. Or on Mrs. Delavan. And don't pull any more of that moving finger stuff. I'm just a little fed up."

"Something funny is going on here."

6

BACK IN Reno we headed for the Club Fortune, where he had forgotten to uncheck his briefcase, on account of being slightly upset when we left there. But we didn't get to the Club Fortune. Because when we started past the hotel there was a terrific jam, with police swinging flashlights and an ambulance parked up Second Street, and I stopped to ask a cop that I knew what had happened. "We don't exactly know yet, Mr. Horner, as we've been trying to save the guy that was standing under the accident when it fell on him—anyway whatever it was that fell on him. A fellow jumped, fell, or div out of one of the hotel rooms, and he landed on a taxi driver that had just set down a fare, and when the ambulance come we let the first guy lay and had them take *him,* the driver, I mean, but now they've come back I guess we'll be sending the dead one to the morgue and maybe his papers'll show more about it. Them suicides have generally got a note on them, pinned to their coat or somewhere."

Keyes had been sitting there paying no attention, but now he sat up and began to look at the hotel and the ambulance and the crowd, where it was gathered around something on the pavement, and soon as the cop moved off he began to cuss at me in a mean, spiteful way, which was plenty unusual with him, because he was generally polite enough, even when he was setting you crazy with his foolishness. I said: "Well, for the love of Pete and Pete's crazy brother-in-law, Keyes, what is it now?"

"You know what it is, Horner. That's the de luxe tier they're all standing under, the one you tried to get me into, and couldn't, the one she's in. Your little pal. Mrs. Delavan, that moved fast, once she got that policy. 'Jumped, fell, div'—or was pushed. And here I've got another one of those things on my

hands, where whodunit is nothing and *what was-it* is the whole thing and even when you know it *how-can-you-prove-it* will lick you, and all because you're in love with a no-good trollop I warned you about from the beginning." He looked me in the eye, then, and came out with some stuff I never thought I'd take from any man, and then he opened the door and got out.

* * *

At the office I sat staring at the four cups, where they were shining in the light of the desk lamp, trying to figure what I was going to do about that policy, if anything, and what I was going to do about Delavan's check, which was in the mail, on the way to the bank. I could get it, as I've said, by taking one of our office envelopes up to the night window, signing a stop slip, and then in the early morning taking another trip there to claim it. I mean, they require a piece of stationery identical with the piece of mail wanted, and while it was a lot of trouble, it was possible. And I thought a long time. And it kept beating in my head I wasn't going to be cheated out of what I had my mind set on, by Keyes or anybody, just on account of some brainstorm he'd had, *even if it all turned out exactly the way he figured it*. If there'd been fraud, O.K., it wasn't the first time it had happened, and let him prove fraud. That was his job, and if he was so slick at it, he could put us in the clear and get his name in the paper. I might as well put this part right on the line: Somewhere in that cogitation was a guy that made up his mind he was going to take a chance. I wish I could say, that had made up his mind he was going to do what was right come hell or high water. Maybe it was right, I don't know. I've tried to tell myself it was right plenty of times. But why I did it was: I wanted what I wanted, and I was willing to take a chance. Right there was where I skated out where the ice was thin, and it was quite a while before it got thicker, and in between, it got quite a lot thinner.

What I actually did do was put in a call for Jackie, at the

Scout ranch, and tell her I was mailing myself a legal paper there, and to hold it for me until I called for it. She was a little short at being waked up, but an important customer was an important customer, so she said O.K. she'd receive it, and put it in a safe place. Then I put the policy in an envelope, stamped it, went over to the post office, and mailed it.

* * *

When I rang Jane on the house phone, she sounded nervous and said some police officers were there in connection with something that had been found on the body, and could I call a little later. I sat in the lobby a half hour, and when a couple of cops came out of the elevator I rang her again and she said come up. I was hardly in the room before she was in my arms, holding onto me, not like we'd done before, with romance in it, but like a scared child does when its father comes around. "It did things to me, to hear your voice. The first I heard of it was from the officers, and I felt as though my face and hands had turned to splinters. And then all of a sudden there you were on the line, my big, solid, dependable Ed."

"Thought you might need me."

"After all—he was my husband."

"You can't laugh that off."

"You want a drink, Ed?"

"I could stand one, if coaxed."

"I need something."

She went into the dinette and made a couple of highballs and after we both had a sip she sat down beside me on the sofa and kept holding onto my hand. "They were awfully nice. The officers, I mean. They hadn't wanted to bother me at all, but there was an unmailed letter in his pocket, addressed to me, and they wanted my permission to read it. It seemed they could have anyway, but in that case it would have come out in the papers, and they didn't want me to see it first that way. It was terribly sweet."

"And said?"

"Nothing. Only what had been said before. Over the telephone. About the divorce. But it was friendly. And it shook me up."

It didn't make sense. Because, remember all that Keyes had said was on the assumption that she had the policy. She didn't. It was safely in the U.S. post office, and would be until it was delivered at the Scout the next day, though it was technically in force, if some lawyer told her. And yet there was the dead man, that landed right under her window. And here she was, shaking like a leaf. And here were her hands that felt like ice. I may as well admit it. I never loved her more than I loved her that minute, and never suspicioned her more, either. And the rest of what I've got to tell you, just so you get it all straight and not fall for some fancy stuff I may put in here and there, to make myself look better, is simply about a guy that kept suspicioning a woman, and getting rid of his hex and then suspicioning her some more, and every time he'd suspicion her he'd fall for her again, until finally he admitted to himself he would go for her no matter what she did, and no matter how much of a heel he had to make of himself to help her do it.

I sat there, trying to square it all up with what Keyes had said, and specially about what he had said about the fellow that told us he was Delavan being nothing but a fake to cover being her lover, when the buzzer rang and when she opened the door that guy, the one I knew as Delavan, walked in. For one second I could feel this throb in the back of my throat, and I wanted to go over and kill them both. But she acted natural, and he said hello to me, and then half took her in his arms. "I'm sorry, Jane. Is there anything I can do?"

"Nothing I can think of."

"You haven't heard anything?"

"About what, Tom?"

". . . Why he did it?"

"He *did* it?"

"Well—I would suppose so."

"I hadn't even thought of that."

"I'm sorry. I just—supposed—"

"That's what the officers meant, wasn't it?"

"They've been here?"

"With his letter he wrote me. But there was *nothing* in it that remotely suggested anything like that. Just a friendly letter. Just—"

"But they—think so too?"

"I guess so."

"I'm sorry I said anything, Jane."

"It's all right."

"Well—if I can do anything."

"I'll let you know."

He went and we sat down again and she lay in my arms with her eyes closed. "That hadn't even once occurred to me. Ed, do you think he did do it? Kill himself, I mean?"

What I said to that I don't know. I held her close, but things were spinning until Keyes rang up. I went in to talk to him and he began apologizing for what he had said. "O.K., Keyes, but what's it all about?"

"It wasn't Delavan that got it."

"*. . . What?*"

"It was Sperry."

"Hold on while I drop dead, will you?"

"Amazing, isn't it, Ed?"

"Well, Keyes, we all make mistakes."

"Now, Ed, I'm really going to surprise you."

"What, again?"

"I don't *feel* I've made a mistake."

"O.K., but I've seen Delavan."

"Do you fool with mathematics, Ed?"

"Not if I can help it."

"I do a little. And sometimes, when you've made a gigantic calculation, and you know you've got hold of something that means a lot, you come out with infinity equalling zero, or something like that. Well, so you're crazy, aren't you? Not as

a rule you're not. You go back and you check your transformations and you find you came in with a minus px instead of plus, and you make your changes, and all of a sudden there it is, just the way you knew it should be. Ed, I only wish I had something to do with it, beyond the group policy we wrote for the taxi company which I'll have to look into. There's something funny here, and I may say Mrs. Sperry agrees with me."

"Oh, you've seen her?"

"Well, Ed, naturally."

"Well *hey, hey,* this changes things. She's a marriageable widow now."

"Ed, don't be silly!"

"I'm not being silly."

"You're being pretty silly."

"Except, of course, there's the midnight Romeo."

"That's been cleared up. He was a drunken valet of Sperry's. When he came to her with a message, she saw the condition he was in and locked the door to report him to Sperry, who had taken the suite down the hall until the hotel could open up the single in between so they could have the big five-room suite that they wanted. While she was at the phone the valet slipped out on the ledge that runs around the building and popped in one of the corridor windows and out to a gambling place before she could stop him. And I'd like no more references to it."

"O.K., pal."

"And, Ed?"

"Yes?"

"Will you remember what I said. That we both think—"

"Will you kindly go jump in the river?"

It was sweet, all right, to stay late, and hold her in my arms, and feel her tremble a little, because she was a nice girl and if the guy had once been her husband that's how a nice girl ought to feel about it. And yet, driving home, it all came back to me how Keyes had sat there and checked it off about the Moving Finger. We hadn't had an advance copy, but we'd got a whiff of some queer-smelling ink.

7

I KEEP TRACK of arrivals, and next morning I drove out to the Cinnabar Ranch to tackle three shots from New Jersey that had flown out for some shooting in their private plane. Sometimes, after their first introduction to a Western trail horse, they're not so hard to sell, and I was doing all right. Two of them had no time for me, but the one that was manager of a Newark sheet and tube plant walked over to the stables with me and he didn't say much, but I had that feeling you get, that he was my onion if I peeled him right. I mean, just keep on talking and first thing you know he'll cut in with whatever it is that's on his mind, generally some question about cost. You get out your rate book, and if you're any good you should book him for his medical right there, and next day have his check. So I did and he did, and then I lost him. How, don't ask me. I had him and I didn't have him, and when I got back to the office I knew I wasn't right. It was eating on me a little more than I had thought, whatever it was I wasn't buying about the death of Richard Sperry, geologist. And when Jane rang me, around noon, and asked me to step over, as the police had some questions they wanted to ask her, and she didn't want to be alone with them, Bo-Bo the Butterfly did a couple of fronts in my stomach.

But when they came up to her suite, a patrolman and a sergeant, they treated her fine, and said all they were trying to do was check for their report where he fell from, or jumped from, whatever it was that he did, and they were pretty certain it had to be from this apartment. They hadn't been able to find anybody that saw him fall, but they had questioned everybody on this tier, and three of them had seen him go by the window. But as one of them was the man in the apartment just below hers, it pretty well let any other apartment out, as hers was on the top deck. The sergeant looked at her, then said: "Not to

upset you any more than I can help, ma'am, there's things people do when they fall that a police officer knows about and not many other people do, and the way these people tell it sounds O.K. to us, and specially it sounds O.K. the way this fellow just below you tells it. It don't sound to us like stuff he might be making up just to get his name in the paper."

"I don't know what you mean."

"A man falling, he moans. It's a pitiful sound."

"Now I understand."

"These people, that's what they noticed."

"It couldn't have been this suite."

"Were you here?"

"No, that's the point. I was out."

"Where was you, if you don't mind saying?"

"At a picture show."

"Here in town?"

"The Rhythm Parade. At the Granada."

"You come straight here?"

"I arrived at the hotel around a quarter to twelve, after starting down to Harold's and changing my mind and coming here. When I got here the ambulance had arrived and the officers were making the crowd stand back, so I had some trouble getting by. I had no idea what had happened, or who it had happened to, until I got up here and the officers rang me, a few minutes later, and then came up and told me."

"Did this man have a key to your room?"

"Not that I know of."

"He come here often?"

"Never. I hadn't seen him in three years."

"How could he have got in?"

"I don't know."

"He in any trouble that you know of?"

"I know nothing of his recent affairs."

"He sick or anything?"

"He was in good health when he was my husband."

"Get along with his wife?"

"I don't know."

"You got any ideas about this? You understand, ma'am, we're not charging anybody. It's nothing like that. But we got to make a report. It's got to be, the way we figure it, that he went out that window there. The first thing is why, and the next thing is, how."

"I can't imagine his doing a thing like that, or any reason he would have for doing it. Or how he could get in here, or why."

"That window's high, for one thing."

"Didn't he have a window of his own?"

"He had a wife of his own, too. Watching him, maybe."

"One reason for suicide, no doubt."

That's what she said, but she kind of snapped it out and everybody laughed. After a minute she laughed. It was easy to see that the cops had put it together on a suicide basis, with some trouble going on between Sperry and Mrs. Sperry as the reason for it. Then the sergeant said: "Anybody else in the apartment at the time you was out?"

"No. . . . Or, wait. I'll see."

She went in the bedroom and picked up the telephone. There was some talk and she came back. "I just happened to think that my maid may have been up, putting out my things for the night."

"Had they been put out when you got in?"

"Yes, of course."

"She coming?"

"She's on her way up."

* * *

..

So that was the third time I saw this Harriet Jenkins that you probably read about, but the first time I really had a good look at her. She was about the sloppiest-looking thing in the way of a woman I ever saw, and cheap, and 100% servant girl from the cap on her head to the shoes on her feet. But if you have some little trouble understanding what came out later, I may as

well tell you she was just about as sexy a number as you're liable to see in a month of looking. She looked maybe twenty-six or -eight, and her face was coarse, her hair ratty red, and her neck that certain color that made you wonder how often she washed. But don't let anybody tell you that under the ten-cent-store makeup, the cotton stockings, the bombazine uniform there wasn't looks, shape and a way of handling her gum. There was also a droopy way of handling her eyes.

She came in with her own key and stopped when she saw the cops and shot a look at Jane like she wanted a cue. But Jane just said they wanted to ask her a few questions and told her she could sit down. Sitting down didn't seem to be something she was very good at, anyway around Jane, but she pulled the chair out from in front of the writing desk, sat on the edge of it, pulled her dress down over her knees, and began looking from one to the other of everybody in the room. That went on for quite some time, because cops, they make a specialty of sitting there looking at you, so you get fidgety wondering what they're thinking. But the sergeant got enough of it and sounded off: "You knew Mr. Richard Sperry?"

"Oh, yes, sir. 'E was my employer for some years."

"When's the last time you seen him?"

She looked away and kind of huddled up like some puppy dog that was getting a bawling out, and then she asked Jane: "Is it important, ma'am?"

"Quite important."

"'E asked me not to say."

"I'd tell it, if I were you."

"'E gave me a tenner not to say."

"Regardless of what he gave you, it's desirable that you tell anything you know, and it may have very bad consequences, particularly to *yourself*, if you conceal anything you know. The police officer has asked you when was the last time you saw Mr. Sperry."

"It was last evening, sir."

"Where?"

"'Ere."

"In the hotel?"

"In this room."

"When?"

"Around eleven, sir."

The cops looked at each other and Jane looked at me and then remembered not to look at me, and you could tell this was something nobody had expected. But the maid didn't seem to think there was anything out of the way about it. "He came here looking for Mrs. Delavan?"

"'E did, twice."

"Tell us about it."

"The first time was around nine. I was lying down on the spare bed, 'aving a look at the illustrated magazines, as Mrs. Delavan was seeing a picture and there was no need for me to 'urry my work in any way. And the buzzer sounded and I got up and put on my cap and peeped out the pigeon 'ole, as they call it 'ere. And 'oo should be in the 'all but Mr. Sperry. And I welcomed 'im in, for I 'adn't seen 'im since I left Bermuda. And 'e was most gracious to me, as we 'ave one or two personal memories, I think I may say. But 'e was deeply disappointed when I told 'im Mrs. Delavan would be late getting in, and shortly after that 'e left. And it was at this time that 'e gave me the tenner and asked me not to mention 'is visit to anybody. 'E repeated 'imself several times. 'Don't misunderstand me, Jenkins,' 'e said. 'Tell nobody. *Nobody.*'"

"And who was nobody?"

"Mrs. Sperry, I think sir, but 'e made no exceptions."

"And this was a little after nine?"

"'Is first visit, yes, sir. Then, around eleven I'd say it was, 'e came again. I invited 'im in to wait for Mrs. Delavan, and 'e began walking up and down 'ere, very nervous like, and often looking out the window for 'er, and leaning out and looking down at the street, until I 'ad to warn 'im it was dangerous as 'e could lose 'is balance and fall. Then 'e calmed down a little and I suggested 'e might prefer to wait for 'er alone. So I left

'im there, and left word with him for Mrs. Delavan I would remain dressed a little while if she needed me, and around twelve, as there was no call, I went to bed."

"Well, that about clears it up."

The sergeant said that to the patrolman, and the patrolman opened a portable typewriter he had beside him and stuck a piece of paper in and started to write. But Jane got up, lit a cigarette, and broke in on it. "Not quite . . . Jenkins, why have you let a whole morning go by without telling me this?"

"Ma'am, 'e asked me not to. 'E gave me a tenner."

"Doesn't it seem to you that under all the circumstances you've been carrying discretion a little too far?"

"I've accepted your suggestion, ma'am, to conceal nothing from the officers, but if I may say 'ow I feel, I'm not looking forward at all to my next meeting with Mr. Sperry, and it'll cost me the tenner, I'll 'ave you know, in connection with all your fine ethical ideas, for I can 'ardly keep it now I've broken the promise I made to him."

". . . Jenkins, haven't you *heard?*"

"I've not been out, ma'am. I've been in my room all morning after making myself a cup of coffee, waiting for your call."

"I didn't ring you—I didn't want to talk about it. . . . Mr. Richard was killed shortly after you left him last night, in a fall from that very window."

"Oh, no, ma'am, don't tell me that!"

* * *

After the cops went and Jenkins quit her bawling, it was Jane that cracked up a little, and it took some little cheek-patting to get her calmed down. But when the phone rang I wouldn't let her answer. I figured it was the reporters, and if she was that much upset to find out Sperry had had something friendly in mind when he came up there, I didn't think facing a bunch of buzzards with lead pencils and notebooks would do her much good. We let the phones ring and I put on her coat

and zipped her down to the basement and out the side way to my car and headed out of town with her and I had no idea where we were going, but we wound up at Sacramento. We had a swell dinner at the Senator and at last it seemed everything was cleared up and coming back she tucked her hand in mine and said she was falling in love, I said O.K. by me. She said O.K. by her. It's funny the dumb things you say that mean so much to you you could remember them the rest of your life.

* * *

We got in late, and it must have been after two o'clock when my phone rang and on the line was Keyes. "Ed, have you seen the papers?"

"About that maid?"

"That's what I mean."

"No, but I was there when she talked to the cops."

"Does it strike you as peculiar?"

"She hadn't heard it. She hadn't been out."

"You know anything about English servants?"

"I don't keep servants."

"Neither do I, but young Norton's always got three or four of them around, and now and then I go out there. Ed, they're the most gossipy, curious breed of people I ever saw, and how that maid, with romance waiting upstairs, could sit there in her room without ever once ringing Mrs. Delavan's phone I simply don't see."

"What romance?"

"The former husband."

"I'm the romance in that household."

"Yeah, but does the maid know it?"

"I wouldn't be surprised."

"Ed, it won't add up. The former husband shows up, hands her a ten-spot to keep her mouth shut, and on the second trip she leaves him there to wait for his former wife who's her mistress. I'm telling you, she couldn't wait to find out what it

was all about. Her nose would be quivering for it. And yet she didn't make one move to go after it—that is, if the papers have got it right. Or have they?"

"On that point, apparently they have."

"Well, thank God it's not my grief."

"Mine either."

"This is one time we can spectate."

"That's it. Just take it easy."

Part Three:

THE WILLING WIDOW

8

THE INQUEST was next night at a mortuary on Sixth Street, and Jane wasn't a witness, but the cops had asked her to attend, as something might come up, and they wanted her there in case. So we drove the maid over, and Keyes was already there, with Mrs. Sperry, a big-shot lawyer in town named Morton Lynch, and a squinty-eyed number named Biggs that kept fingering a trick derby he had, that seemed to be Sperry's valet, and that corresponded, in looks at least, to the guy named in the eye's report on who didn't come out of the room that night. Mrs. Sperry was in black, with a veil, but one you could see through. She didn't look at Jane or the maid, but after we had sat down she nodded at me with a sad little smile, and reached over and gave my hand a grip. Some newspaper men were there, with three or four other guys that weren't newspaper men but tried to look like they were. They work for the adjusters, so I knew there was an insurance angle. Some cops were at a table, and on the other side of a counter was the undertaker, but back there on a table you could see part of a sheet, with something under it. The whole room wasn't much bigger than my private office, and we all sat on folding chairs that had been set up in rows with an aisle down the middle. Every time somebody would come in they'd start to sit in the first two rows on the right-hand side, but the cops would wave them to other seats. It turned out, when some more cops came in with them, where they'd been rounding them up, these two rows were for the jury.

The coroner was Dr. Hudson, that I had met once or twice, and the cops all stood up when he came in. He was a squatty

little guy, and after he had sat down and taken some papers out of his briefcase and studied them, the same sergeant as had come to see Jane banged on the table with the flat of his hand for us to stop talking. Then he asked all who had been summoned to testify to raise their right hands and the maid did and quite a few others did and he gave them the oath to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and they all mumbled they would. Then he called the maid and the valet to view the body and when they had he asked them if they knew the deceased and they said they did and he was Richard Sperry and lived on the island of Bermuda. Then he asked if there was anybody else who wished to view the body, corroborate the identification, contest it, or add anything to this part of the inquest, and he looked at Mrs. Sperry, but she shook her head no and put her handkerchief to her eyes. Then he had two cops tell how they had got the call in their car, and all the rest of it, how it had happened that night, anyway from their end of it. Then the ambulance doctor that had certified the death testified. Then two autopsy doctors went on, and they told a lot of compound occipital stuff, but all it seemed to add up to was that he died of a bashed in head. Then he had a huddle with the sergeant and called the maid. She told it about like she had told it to the cops. Then he looked around and asked if anybody else had any knowledge of the case. He didn't expect any answer, you could tell that, because he was already putting his papers back in the briefcase. And Keyes didn't either, you could tell from the way he was whispering to Lynch. And his head couldn't have snapped around quicker if a gun had been fired in his ear than it did when Mrs. Sperry rose up like a ghost coming out of the floor, stepped into the aisle, did a slow march to the chair they had put out for the witness, and said: "I have."

* * *

"You know something of this, Mrs. Sperry?"
"I do."

"Something more than you told the police?"

"I told the police only the barest facts—that I spent the evening in my suite, that I was not with my husband at the time he met his tragic end, and that I had nothing more to tell them."

"You mean, other things have come to light since?"

"I mean there was more."

"That you—withheld?"

"I had to know my legal position first."

"In respect to?"

"Self-destruction."

"I don't quite understand you."

"In this country, what do we call it?"

"Suicide, I suppose you mean."

"In England, only the insane commit suicide."

"I'm not following you at all."

"Others, and my husband was as sane as you are, commit *felo de se,* which under English law is a criminal act."

"Mrs. Sperry, we're holding this inquest in America."

"The estate, however, will be settled in Bermuda."

"Is the estate involved, Mr. Lynch?"

"I would say, yes."

"You mean the insurance, on a suicide clause?"

"I'm not talking about insurance. There is no insurance, payable to Mrs. Sperry at any rate, that we know of. I'm not prepared to give an opinion at the drop of a hat as to how much the estate is involved under English law in a case where the deceased took his own life. All I know is, if the verdict here tonight is rendered that way, it is possible the estate will automatically become the estate of a criminal, which may be, for all I know, administered differently in England from the estate of other persons. And in the case of Mr. Richard Sperry, part of the estate will be copyrights on valuable technical works, which may be forfeited, as it is highly possible a criminal in England is not entitled to copyright. This is a field too tricky for an American attorney to make any impromptu assumptions about.

I should like to say that as her counsel I have advised Mrs. Sperry she is not required to give, and in my opinion shouldn't give, any evidence in regard to this, of any kind, for a wife cannot be compelled to testify to her husband's crime—"

"In this country it's not a crime."

"Pardon me, it may be held, in the property jurisdiction, to be a crime."

"She is not compelled, naturally, to testify."

"But I'm *going* to testify."

"What is it you have to tell, Mrs. Sperry?"

"I saw my husband leap to his death."

They'd been having it back and forth, not too hot, more or less friendly, and everybody was kind of interested, because all that English stuff was new to them, but now if a nest of hornets had been kicked over in the middle of the floor they couldn't have set up a louder buzz than went around when she said that. The sergeant banged with his hand again, and they got quiet, but the quick way one of the reporters slipped out of the room showed what a sensation it was. The coroner stared at her and said: "You were with him at the time? Contrary to what you told the police?"

"I was where I told them I was. In my suite."

"Please continue, Mrs. Sperry."

"I was sitting by my window, very depressed."

"At—anything relevant to this case?"

"At my husband's talk about ending his life."

"He'd been talking that way?"

"Often."

"Yes, but lately?"

"That night."

"Did he have some reason?"

"None, none at all."

"But there must have been *something*."

"He said, when we came upstairs after dinner, 'It is a very curious thing. Here I am, a man to be envied. I am successful,

I have been recognized generously by the country I claim as my own, I have a beautiful wife, I love her, I am loved in return. I have everything to live for. But your true suicide type finds his own reasons. The time will come when I'll do this thing . . .' His reasons never made sense, at least to me. And yet, perhaps all the more for that reason, I felt he was warning me."

She took out her black handkerchief, wiped her eyes, and went on: "I don't know how long I sat there. He had gone out some time before. A little *before* nine, as I recall. Then I noticed something above me. Above me and across from me, on the street side of the hotel. A man appeared at a window and leaned out. I couldn't see who it was, but it seemed to me he was acting most peculiarly. Then he climbed out and sat there, with his feet dangling outside, and stared down at the street—"

"Wait a minute. At Mrs. Delavan's window?"

"I don't know her window."

"You're in the south wing?"

"Yes, on the seventh floor."

"Facing the setback?"

"My sitting room does."

"Then your suite, on that side, looks across to hers!"

"I suppose so. How long this took, I don't know. It seemed ages, but I imagine it was no more than a few seconds. I had some horrible premonition who it was, and jumped up to open the window and call. I have some recollection of the window sticking, but I can't be sure. The man jumped. He braced his hands against the sill, and jumped. From then on, I have no recollection of anything until I woke up on the floor, deathly sick. How long I had been there I don't know. I got up, went to the bathroom to bathe my face in cold water, then went to the bedroom. Then the phone rang. It was the police, asking if they could come up."

"And then you withheld what you knew?"

"Not intentionally, at first."

"What actually did you tell them?"

"What they asked of me: Who I was, how long I had been in Reno, where I had spent the evening. It wasn't until they had been there some little time that it dawned on me they hadn't any idea of what had happened—except, of course, conjecturally. I mean, they still didn't know which suite he had jumped from —or 'fallen,' as they always added, I think to spare my feelings. And then it occurred to me that perhaps nobody except myself had seen him. People don't as a rule go about staring at the top floor of a hotel at that hour of night. Then it was, and then only, that I decided to say nothing to them until I had engaged counsel."

"They told you he'd been in the bar?"

"I believe they did."

"You didn't think it funny he'd gone up there?"

"Up where? I didn't know whose room it was."

"You have no idea what he was doing there?"

"I'm content to believe he had his reasons."

"I guess that's about all."

"One other thing, Doctor."

"Yes, Mr. Lynch?"

"I think you owe it to her, as she seems to want full weight and credence given to her evidence here, and in no way regards it as a subjective matter, I mean she wouldn't be satisfied with merely getting it off her chest, as they say—to instruct this jury, before it considers its verdict, that her delay in disclosing what she saw in no way impeaches her credibility. She was not required to testify, or tell the police anything."

"Mr. Lynch, why don't you tell them?"

"Then by me, the jury is so informed."

"Mrs. Sperry, may I raise a point that you could clear up, but that would have more to do with the question of credence than all the law Mr. Lynch knows, though I don't doubt he knows a lot. Why do you disregard him and tell it anyway?"

"Out of respect for the truth."

"Even if the estate is involved?"
"A clear conscience comes first."

* * *

You could tell by the looks on their faces after they came out of the back room that the jury was going to give her a break on all that legal stuff. The verdict was that he died from the effects of a fall, caused "in a manner unknown to this jury."

9

I WAS out on the street, waiting for Jane, while she stood by with the maid on some stuff the cops had to wind up, and I had taken quite a few turns up and down the block before I noticed Keyes around the corner, staring at the river with that same look in his eyes he'd had that night in the car, before Sperry was killed. I strolled over, and it was a minute or two before he said: "Ed, when somebody dies, you deliver the indemnity check in person?"

"Oh, always."

"On a suicide case, how does the woman act?"

"The widow?"

"How does she take it?"

"Well, she's generally upset. Naturally."

"They just hate it."

"Well, who does love an undertaker?"

"That's not quite it. What they feel is not grief. It's resentment. Maybe they keep quiet about it, as a matter of pride. But they've got that look in their eye. They regard it as an insult, a reflection on the marriage, and especially a reflection on themselves. . . . Did you get anything like that in there?"

"I thought she behaved with great dignity."

"But how much bitterness did she show?"

"I didn't notice any."

"Nor I either. I've been with her now for a considerable part of two whole days, and I've been struck by her complete freedom from rancor. She's cracked up a few times, but there have been no hard feelings, and in fact when I've called her attention to one or two peculiar things about it she's always come back with something that showed she preferred to regard it as an accident. Now tonight she says she saw it happen, and kept it concealed for legal reasons—but they were exactly the kind of reasons she would have placed before me, if it all took place

as she says it did. Furthermore, it wouldn't be possible for a woman to live a week or more in the same hotel as her husband's former wife, and not know where her room was. Furthermore, even without law, or possible insurance angles, no member of a family ever admits anything that spells suicide. That's one thing they'll do anything to keep under cover, to pretend didn't happen. And in my experience, I've never known an exception: if they do seem to come out in the open, it's to cover something up."

". . . Such as?"

"Whatever she really saw."

"Spit it out, Keyes. What are you getting at?"

"Ed, Lynch said there was no insurance angle, but we know there is, from the investigators that attended this inquest. But we don't know what those investigators, if they were to stay on the case, might turn up. The quickest way to get rid of them, if there's a suicide clause in effect somewhere, would be to place sworn testimony on the record of a public inquest that establishes an eye-witness. That closes the case—for the cops, who are concerned only with violations of the law, and for these buzzards, that are concerned with everything, up and down the line, that affects a claim . . . Ed, I confess this disturbs me."

"Your lady love fibbing on you, you mean?"

"It's shifty. And I've been—"

"Kind of stuck on her?"

"I may as well admit it. . . . And yet—if she's covering up for *his* good name, to conceal some sort of scandal she knew had to come out, if this thing were really investigated—"

"She'd still be your perfect lady."

"That's it. And she is a thoroughbred, we *know* that."

"At least, if she was a horse, we'd know it."

"And that girl, that Mrs. Delavan—"

"Oh, so *she's* the scandal!"

"Well, after all, it was her room, and she was his former wife."

* * *

I didn't clip him on the jaw, you'll probably be surprised to learn, but later that night I was to hear about insurance again. It was in Jane's suite, and she had her head on my shoulder, and was relaxed and friendly, because, as she said, "I could never bring myself to take pleasure in the death of another human being, but I can't forget either that this writes *finis* to one of the most ghastly chapters of my life. I had nothing to do with Dick's decision, have no idea of the reason for it. Just the same, he's gone. It's the end. I'm not glad, but for the first time in a long, long while, I'm at peace."

Then the phone rang.

I paid no attention, lit a cigarette while she went in the bedroom to answer. But she was gone some little time, and when she came back she said: "What could he have meant? 'Do something about the insurance?' "

"Who was he?"

"Ireland, I think he said."

". . . He's a go-between. For insurance companies."

"But—there *is* no insurance."

"There has to be, if he rang you."

"There was, but the policies lapsed."

"Do you still have them?"

"They're in Kennebunkport."

"Maine?"

"My family was there when I came back from Bermuda. We have a summer place there. It had been years since I had banking connections in New York, so I put them in a safe deposit box there. Then we came back on Labor Day and I couldn't get them, or my other stuff that was with them. It didn't seem to make much difference, as we expected to be back in the fall, for skiing. But various things came up. And then there began this wrangle with Dick, by mail, over the policies. He wanted to change the beneficiary, to this woman, I suppose, but to do it he had to have the policies. But I simply was not going to take a special trip to Maine for some insurance policies to be made out to a woman reeking with money already, and one that I

owed not one bit of consideration to, believe me. Then the last letter I got from him said most curtly that he was going to have the policies cancelled. Or let them lapse, I guess that was it."

"Did he do it?"

"Well, did he? I haven't heard from him since."

"He was a fool if he did."

"Why?"

"You got insurance, you've got it. You lose it you don't know where you stand. You've got to pass another medical examination, you'll pay a higher premium, as you've got older all the time, and there's always the risk you can't pass the examination. He probably kept them up. You'll cash in—that is, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"The suicide clause touches you out."

"On that they could refuse to pay?"

"If it's still in effect. When were these policies written? Before your marriage with Sperry broke up, I would assume."

"There were several. The smaller ones, totalling twenty-eight hundred dollars, I think, were written about five years ago. But the big one, for twenty-five thousand, was taken out a little less than two years ago."

"Those clauses generally run for two or three years."

"Ed, I suddenly have a horrible suspicion. That's why she said what she did. Just now, at the inquest. Ed, did it strike you that was a most unlikely tale? Possibly not, as you didn't know him. Of all things you could believe about him, that would be the last. . . . And yet why would she lie about it just to keep me out of money? Is she that vindictive about me?"

"Taking an awful risk, too."

"I would think so. . . . What do I do now?"

"Get the policies."

"I can't."

"You'll have to."

"I'll have to go to Maine in person, and I can't leave Reno. I'll lose my residence if I do, and have to begin all over again."

"O.K., begin over again, but get them."
"But it'll be six more weeks, and—"
"And the rest of your life. What do you care?"
"I hadn't thought of that."
"O.K., think about it."
"With you, is that the idea?"
"Something like that."

* * *

I went down around twelve, and in the lobby Keyes was waiting for me. I started by, because he'd got under my skin with what he had said, but then I thought oh well, he makes everybody hate him so why act like he knew any better. I wasn't any too agreeable about it, though, when I asked him what he wanted, and I took my time about it when he asked me to sit down. He took out a fountain pen and held it out for me to look at. "You'd be surprised where that came from."

"I never saw it before."

"Nor I, Ed. The bartender gave it to me."

"He never gave me a gold pen."

"To give Mrs. Sperry."

"Likes her?"

"It was turned in. It belongs to Sperry, and as I'd been seen with her quite a lot, they thought I wouldn't mind seeing that she got it. He had lent it to somebody that wanted to write down the title of one of his books and neglected to give it back before he went upstairs. It seems there was a call that night from Mrs. Sperry, to the bartender. Asking him to remind Sperry not to forget his engagement with the little lady that was waiting upstairs."

"Who, for instance?"

"She didn't say. The bartender reminded Sperry and he went."

"O.K., Keyes, but why hasn't the bartender told it?"

"Why should he? It ties in with what he's seen in the papers, and who would get mixed up with something unless he had a

reason to? So far as he knows, it means nothing. We know that it does. Something went on that night that she wants bottled up, and so far she's got it her way."

"At Jane's expense, you might say."

"How so?"

"How do you think? The suicide clause naturally."

"Oh, so there *is* insurance?"

"Turns out there is."

"Now it makes sense."

"Hey, you! On a bartender's say-so—"

"But, Ed, why would he make this up? Besides, I've already checked on it. The girl on the switchboard, when I said I was trying to trace ownership of a pen, and asked if she remembered any call to the cocktail bar around eleven night before last, had it right away: Mrs. Sperry wanted to speak with Alec, and she got him for her. Alec is the bartender and it was he who handed me the pen."

"Is this your case?"

"In a way, yes."

"I didn't know we were on the risk."

"Ed, I've told you, there's something I've got to know. If she's covering something she's involved in, it would be a blow, I admit it. It would—make a difference. But if she's covering for somebody else, frankly I'd consider it magnificent."

"Covering what, for instance?"

"Murder, perhaps."

"But nothing serious?"

"Scandal, pretty definitely."

I think I've told you, he kind of gets on people's nerves. You'd like to knock his block off, but for some reason you don't. He got this dreamy look in his eyes, and said: "We know now, pretty definitely, what the scandal was and who it was. The phone call proves Mrs. Sperry knew about it. It's beginning to tie up."

10

I SPENT half the night lying awake, with that same old creepy feeling coming over me, because there was the phone call and there was the insurance, and you couldn't laugh them off. Next day the papers were full of the inquest, with "wealthy American baring facts of English husband's fatal fall," and I kept waiting for it, whatever it was that was about to pop. And then everything died down, and you'd think there'd never been a guy named Richard Sperry, or a fatal fall, or anything. Jane flew east for the policies, got them, flew back, put her claim in. On the smaller ones she was O.K. and collected. On the big one the suicide clause still had a month to run, and she hadn't a Chinaman's chance, at least as it looked then, but I told her to put a claim in anyway. She started her period of residence all over again, and the Count's education all over again too, with me at the edge of the track looking on, and Jackie getting that gleam in her eye, over what she said was the prettiest show ring entry she'd ever had at the ranch. Delavan was mildly upset at the residence period having to be started all over again, but not as much as we would have expected. The day after the autopsy, or pretty soon anyway, Keyes crossed me up by going home. I had thought he was really going to bear down and try to marry that pile of money. La Sperry, I mean. But he went home and stayed home. It came late fall, and I picked out a Christmas present for Jane, a gold cigarette case I thought she'd like. I had it gift-wrapped and tucked it away in my desk.

And then one day she and I were headed for a ride and were going down in the hotel elevator when a bellboy got on with a little fox terrier with a blanket on her underneath the leash harness. Jane no sooner saw her than she gave a yelp and took her in her arms, and come to find out, it was Sperry's dog and her name was Dolly. But if the dog had ever seen her before she gave no sign of it. All she did was mope, and the boy said she'd

been like that since Sperry died.-"If something's not done, Mrs. Delavan, I don't think she's going to be around much longer."

"Perhaps I can help."

"Gee, if you only would."

So we fixed it up she was going to exercise the little thing, and when she got done she'd bring him back to the lobby, and the boy seemed to get it she didn't want any truck with Mrs. Sperry. But a wink passed, and they fixed it up the exercising would be done on the roof. "That's one thing I learned from Dick. If you're in a hotel and you have a dog on your hands, the roof's closer than the street, and a great deal simpler."

* * *

The roof was just a jumble of vents, chimneys, and water tank, with a boardwalk promenade for the sun-tanners and badminton nets and shuffle board stuff and patio furniture. We walked Dolly around and how far we got cheering her up was nowhere. After a while we sat down and Jane took the dog in her lap and tried talking to her. And then all of a sudden she said: "What's *she* doing here?"

"Who? Mrs. Sperry?"

"Yes. I thought she'd left."

"Does she *have* to be doing something?"

"She doesn't live here."

"Maybe she just likes Nevada."

"And what's *he* doing here? Tom?"

"Well, you're getting a divorce, aren't you?"

"*I'm* getting a divorce. He came out here to get an annulment, and now he's changed his mind. I'm to file a suit which he's not going to contest, and there's no reason whatever, no legal reason I can think of, for him to stay on here."

"Maybe he just *says* he's changed his mind."

"I'm sure he's not crossing me."

"Well, it's nothing to us."

It popped in my mind about the phone call to the bartender,

which I had never told her about, because it could have meant her. But now she seemed 100% on the up-and-up and I heard myself open up about it. "Ed, why haven't you said something about this before?"

". . . I thought it might upset you."

"You mean you thought I did have some sort of engagement with Dick?"

"I mean I was sick of him."

"But I hadn't seen him in three years."

"So you told me."

"And I was at a picture show."

"Yes, I know."

"But—I still don't understand it. I'm sure the bartender told Mr. Keyes exactly what you say he did, and that it happened that way, but—it doesn't sound like her—or anybody. To send a message through a bartender instead of asking for Dick and talking to *him*. And what he did next, coming to my room, and having that long palaver with Jenkins. He was kind to servants, but awfully short-spoken. That he should have let down his hair the way he did, or she says he did, is almost incredible. It all seems so strange."

* * *

By that time the dog was so restless she did nothing but moan and twist and wriggle on Jane's lap. Jane handed her to me, went and got a cord off one of the badminton nets, and tied one end of it to the leash and the other to a table leg. Then she gave the little dog a pat and told her to run around. The dog didn't wait, or even look at us. She gave a little whimper, raced for the parapet, and jumped. I dived for the cord and missed, but the table leg held it, and in a second I was hauling in a pooch that was scared so bad, and bopped so bad, where she whammed against the wall outside when the cord tightened, that she clean forgot she was supposed to be torching for somebody, and was so glad when I held her to me it was comical. But when I went over to Jane with her all I got was a stare.

"Ed, do you know what's under that spot where she jumped?"

I looked, and what I was looking at was the place on the pavement where they picked up Sperry. "Ed, this is directly over that window of mine that Constance Sperry said she saw him jump from. The little lady he had the engagement with is right there in your arms, and he had a standing date with her every night—every night they were together, that is—since he bought her in Venezuela five years ago. She was here, she saw it happen, and that's why she leaped into what, so far as her little mind could understand, was his grave. Ed, after a phone call to the bartender, made in such way that it must have been intended to implicate me in something she knew was about to happen, and after what we've just seen, there's only one thing to believe. They brought Dolly up, they started walking around, she stopped to admire the view or something. He stopped beside her. Then a quick push, and with that low parapet almost anything would cause him to lose his balance. Then a beeline to her room to take the call from the police she knew would come."

"Seems funny they weren't seen."

"Who would see them?"

"Elevator girl. Anybody."

"But you don't know hotels, perhaps. They don't like dogs taken up on the roof. Didn't you see the wink the boy gave me just now, as I slipped him his dollar? And Dick always used the stairway, where they would meet *nobody* that hour of night. And the phone call, which would mean one thing to Dick and another thing to the bartender, and the place she picked out to do it, would throw suspicion on me if any suspicion arose, because she must have known about those insurance policies. Suicide, though, that was safer. The frame-up against me she didn't really expect to fall back on unless she absolutely had to."

"But what would she kill him for?"

"Let me think."

So she thought. After a long time she said: "Maybe I have it now."

"It makes no sense to me."

"Dick probably wanted the marriage to go on. Perhaps she didn't."

"How do you figure this out?"

"The way she acted with Tom. Complimenting him when he told her about that insurance he tried to take out for me. I took that for just a little preliminary soft soap, though the real scheme would be disclosed later. Then when Dick threatened Tom, it all fitted together and I took it for granted the two Sperrys were a team. But if she was up to something Dick didn't know about, if she's found somebody she likes better—"

"Like Keyes?"

"I think she's kidding Keyes."

"Go on."

"If she was up to something Dick would never have stood for, then Tom's annulment action was the one perfect break for her. It would be granted, it would almost certainly lead to the Bermuda court rescinding Dick's divorce, and her marriage would then, of course, be automatically annulled. She'd be out, she'd never have to face anything up with Dick, and best of all, there'd be nothing to decide about property or anything of that sort, and remember she's the one that has the money. But when Dick scared Tom out of it, that popped everything into the soup. So, do something quick. So, phone call. So, get him above my window. So, bump him."

"Keyes thought she was scared to death of the insurance investigators, and what they might find out. He figured she made it suicide, so they'd close the case and go home."

"Then he thinks she did it?"

". . . He thinks you did."

"*I?* Are you serious?"

"He is. And if he is, it is."

"But why would I do it?"

"Insurance. Spite."

"Over what?"

"Sperry marrying her."

"Then Mr. Keyes must be crazy."
"About darling Constance he is."

* * *

We went over it some more, and the more we went over it the more it made sense. She kept going back to the swim in Bermuda, when she was sure he meant she wasn't coming back, and said he was never like that until he met Mrs. Sperry. Then that got her started on Jenkins, and then she said: "But Ed, why was *she* in on it?"

"You sure she was?"

"If it happened up here she was lying."

"Keyes thought her story very peculiar."

"But *why?* She didn't even like Constance Sperry. After I left, she did nothing but write me what a hell on earth it was working for her, and pleading with me to take her back and bring her to the United States. And it wasn't until I found out her mother had been a waitress on the Aquitania and she was actually born in New York that it was possible to get her in, but those letters, believe me, were pitiful."

"When was this?"

"Last month."

"Then she didn't come to this country with you?"

"Under the law she couldn't."

When we went down she rang Jenkins and told her to come up. "Wait a minute, Jane. I'm not sure I'd tip what you know until we've got this better figured out than we have. I wouldn't say anything to her. Not now."

"Say something to her? I'm going to fire her."

"No! You're forgetting something!"

"I don't think so."

"Your big policy. Your $25,000."

"What does she have to do with it?"

"If he didn't do it, and you didn't, you're due to get paid. And if we can sweat it out of Jenkins who did do it, you better

keep her here till we're ready with the heat, and she'll be where you want her instead of some place else."

"I'll do no more about the insurance."

"What?"

"I must have an end of this!"

She had the beat-up look around the eyes, and was already at the writing desk, making out a check for Jenkins' pay. So she went through on it, the dumbest thing that was done in connection with the whole case. Jenkins stood there, and kept asking if there was something she had done, and couldn't she have some explanation, or another chance. Jane kept saying she'd decided on another arrangement, and pretty soon Jenkins left. It seemed to me, watching her, that she was talking more to watch Jane than to hang onto her job.

* * *

That night when I got home there was a message to ring Operator 22, or whatever the number was, in Los Angeles. When she put me through it was Keyes. "Ed, the Reno police have that phone call to the bartender."

"How do you know?"

"They rang me."

"Why you?"

"To see what I knew. After all, I'd been with Mrs. Sperry a lot, and I delivered the pen."

"And what did you say?"

"That it was the first I had heard of it."

"Then that lets you out."

"Ed, I'm warning you."

"Thanks."

"Keep away from that dame."

"You coming up here?"

"I might fly. Over the week-end."

"About the taxi driver or Mrs. Sperry?"

"Oh, the driver recovered."

"Drop in. I may have news."

11

SO HE flew up here, just about the time the cops began giving Jane a working over that got worse from day to day. First they'd ask to come over, she'd ask me to stand by, then they'd go over it some more, where she was that night, when was the last time she'd seen Sperry, and they'd spring trap questions on her until a couple of times I had to kick their shins to make them get back over the line. That's bad with a cop, to act like there's anything you're afraid to be questioned about, and to have a boy friend around a woman to tell her how to talk. But with that look in her eyes, I wasn't sure how much she could take. They'd go, and next day they'd be back, and you could tell they'd been talking to Mrs. Sperry, but what she'd told them you couldn't tell, because if there's one thing a cop is good at it's keeping his own mouth shut and letting you do the talking. All you could say for it was that the papers didn't have it, so at least it could have been worse.

But when Keyes arrived, and finally did get around to dropping by the office, I found out what Mrs. Sperry had told them. The point was she was trying, or pretending to try, to cover up for Jane, but since it was her own phone call, she had to put it on the line who it was Sperry was supposed to have the date with. She said Sperry had told her there was a "little old lady," who "lived upstairs in the hotel somewhere," and "wanted to ask him some questions about Bermuda," if he "would drop by at the end of his evening, before he went to bed." And it seems the cops thought there was something funny about it, all of it, especially the little old lady, and the funny hours she kept, and the funny coincidence they couldn't find any little old lady. "But she was ready for them, Ed. Do you know what she told them?"

"Something good, I bet."

"That she didn't believe it either."

"Well, say, that *is* good."

"That it seemed so fishy, and that was what made her so depressed. She was certain the story about the little old lady was just an excuse of Sperry's to get out."

"Funny she reminded him though, Keyes."

"That was to check on him."

"That he was in the bar?"

"On a drinking deck, not a jumping deck."

"Why did she practically beg him to go topside?"

"To vex him."

"Well say, Keyes, that's very good."

"If he got sore enough he'd stay in the bar."

"She told all this to the cops?"

"She's a thoroughbred, Ed."

"Just how do you figure she's bred so high?"

"She's covering scandal."

"Sperry's?"

"With—whoever."

"Oh, say it, I don't mind."

"His former wife, would be my guess."

"If so, why did she remind him?"

"Well, you can hardly blame her, another way you look at it, if she knew he did have a date with Mrs. Delavan, for not wanting a stood-up lady to come roaring down to the bar and letting the whole world in on it. If he had a date he had one, and there was nothing she could do about it. But at least she could make sure that the date was where it was supposed to be and not all over the hotel. She could localize it, as they say in medicine, and pretend she didn't care."

"So she called him?"

"Ed, she could hardly anticipate that—"

"Jane would up with his heels and heave him out the window?"

"Whatever she did."

"You ever pushed somebody out of a window?"

"No."

"O.K., try."

I stood up in front of the window and kept egging him on to try and push me out. He kept saying I was leaving out the big element that had to be considered, which was surprise, and I kept saying if anybody could get me out, with the sill across my waist, and the sash across my eyes, they were probably a wrestler but not likely a slim, small girl that didn't weigh but 105 pounds. After a while he got sore, and I piled in: "O.K. then, Keyes. You've let a woman take you like Grant took Richmond, but now you get it."

I told him about the dog, and all the things Jane and I had figured out, and he had been pink from the winter nip when he came in there, but now he got white, gray, and green. There's a couch in there in the office where I sometimes have a nap, and he went over and lay down. "You think this is something I just dreamed up? You think—?"

But he waved his hand for me to shut up and I did. For a long time he lay there, as sick a thing in the way of a man as I ever hope to look at. Once he opened his eyes and said: "Did Mrs. Delavan tell this to the cops? I mean, about the dog?"

"She answered their questions. They didn't ask her about any dog and she didn't tell them. She stuck to what she knew. The dog, if you want to make something of it, that's in the realm of conjecture."

"Then that's all right."

It was along toward sundown of a winter Saturday when he finally stood up and went over to the window and stood staring out at the city. He looked like an old man. "Ed, I'm powerful hard hit."

"I'm sorry, Keyes."

"It goes together like a clock. Clears it all up."

"Not quite all. That maid—"

"Simple."

"Not to me. She didn't even like Mrs. Sperry. She—"

"The maid was not in on it."

"Even you thought she lied."

"Did you ever see the play Macbeth?"

"In college we played Macbeth. I was Banquo."

"Fine, then you'll understand what I see in this. In Macbeth, a man suspects that another man suspects him. Macbeth has an idea, from something Banquo says, that Banquo thinks there was something peculiar about the murder of Duncan. So what does Macbeth do? Banquo has nothing on him. It's all in the realm of what Banquo thinks. So to get rid of Banquo he puts himself in the power of three thugs, who he hires to kill Banquo. Bad, Ed. A very bad play. But it brings out the principle involved here. Only a fool would put herself in the power of a Cockney servant girl on something like this, especially when she didn't need her help, or anybody's. Therefore we can only conclude she got in the girl's power by accident."

"Meaning?"

"Ed, she was up there. Jenkins was."

"And saw it?"

"Just happened to. And cashed in."

". . . What would she be doing there?"

"At that hour of night, I would say there was only one thing she would be doing, and that would be lolly-gagging with a guy. For a little slavey that sleeps in one of the small inside rooms down over the kitchen and isn't allowed to bring anybody in there, that just about would be the answer. She was up there, snugged into a canvas swing with a guy, and here comes this little procession of a man, a woman, and a dog. She keeps quiet, hoping not to be seen, and we can pretty well be sure that the guy, whoever he was, wanted it that way too. The procession marches around, and she sees it's Sperry, Mrs. Sperry —and who else does she see, Ed?"

"Dolly."

"Who can't talk, but can tell tales."

"But why that story Jenkins told the cops?"

"There was nothing else for her to do."

"What reason did she have?"

"To protect Mrs. Sperry, for a price, we can assume. To get it off the roof."

"And why Mrs. Sperry's story at the inquest?"

"The insurance investigators. If they could hang it on Mrs. Delavan, they'd save themselves every cent of their obligation. Therefore, they'd dig. But digging, real digging, was what Constance dare not have. If she hadn't been seen, then the plant that was made by the phone call, with the location of the body, would have made Mrs. Delavan guilty, so fine. But once there was evidence against *herself,* once there was stuff those insurance guys might turn up, she had to do something to get them out of the picture. On suicide, they were satisfied. So she made it suicide. She thought fast."

"Nice."

"Horrible."

We walked out to the street, and he took my arm. "Ed, I can be thankful of one thing, though."

"Yeah? What's that?"

"It's not my case."

"I guess that helps."

"But, Ed, suppose I had to pin it on her!"

* * *

He went back to Los Angeles, and for a couple of weeks all that happened was the itching I did over the $25,000 in insurance Jane had thrown away by firing Jenkins. But then one day Jane rang me and said the police wanted to talk to her again, and could I be there. This time it was a couple of plain-clothes men, by the name of Brady and Lindstrom, and I think it was Lindstrom that did the talking. He fished a gold bracelet out of his pocket that was bent up quite a little and had three horses' heads on it with rubies for eyes. Or garnets, whatever they were. Nobody quite seemed to know. He asked Jane if she'd ever seen it before, and she said: "Yes, it's mine."

"Where'd you get this here bracelet?"

"From a cousin of mine."

"What's his name?"

"Harold Sherman."

"When was this?"

"About ten years ago. When I was in school. I rode three of his horses to firsts in a Long Island horse show, and this was his way of thanking me. I'm sure, if you'll look, you'll find some sort of engraving inside there about it."

"When did you wear it last?"

"I've never worn it."

"Why not?"

"Well, it's pretty ghastly, you know."

Lindstrom looked at it and Brady looked at it and they kind of looked at each other. You could tell that something being pretty ghastly was a new idea to them. So far as they knew, if it was gold and it had jewels in it, it must be O.K. and if she said she'd never worn it, it was a 2-1 shot she was lying. Lindstrom said: "Who has been wearing it?"

"Nobody that I know of."

"When did you miss it?"

"I haven't missed it."

"You didn't know it was gone?"

"Not until now."

". . . Where you been keeping it?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean I put it away when it was given me, I don't recall now just exactly where. I wrote a polite note about it, and forgot it. I haven't seen it since—I can't say when."

"You got a jewel box?"

"Yes, of course."

"Didn't you keep it there?"

"I tell you, I don't know. It could be."

"I'll have a look at this here jewel box."

I said: "No, you won't."

". . . Hey, Mac, who are you?"

"A friend. And my name's not Mac, it's Horner, like you were told. And the lady's not some tart in the Monday line-up.

She's accommodated you so long as it was a question of clearing up a case that seemed to be giving you some trouble. Now it involves going into her jewel box that's different and how'd you like to get the hell out?"

"Mac, I don't care for that kind of talk."

"A judge'll be talking to you in an hour if—"

"O.K., O.K., if that's how you want it."

"Beat it."

* * *

It took me an hour to get her quiet again, but then I called a Lieutenant I knew over at headquarters to find out what it was about. It was a couple of hours before he called me back. "Ed, it was found on the street, the way I get it, the night Sperry took his dive. Found by a brother and sister on their way home from a bowling alley and they advertised it in the Register, under found, by the name of Jane and by the name that was engraved on it. They didn't get any answer so they advertised again. And then Lindstrom, he got interested in it, why Jane didn't come to get her bracelet so he went over there to talk to them. He traced who it belonged to by the New York jeweler that made it, and that's about all I can tell you, but I guess Lindstrom wanted to know more about it on account of that other stuff that's been turned up."

"O.K., thanks."

Jane and I figured on that a while, and after a while she said: "Ed, I'm getting frightened. It's more of that devilish plan. She threw that down there at the time she pushed him over."

"How would she have it?"

"I could have left it in Bermuda."

"Any way you can prove you did?"

"Jenkins might know. She packed me."

"If we could get out of her whether you brought it with you or left it in Jamaica that would be a help."

"I'll get her up here."

"She still here?"

"I suppose so."

I give you one guess, though, what the answer was on that. She had checked out without giving a forwarding address or anything. "All right, Ed, I'll say it since you won't. Firing her was just about the stupidest thing I ever did in my life, and you warned me, I can't say you didn't."

"We'll find her."

But suppose you try finding a Cockney girl that walked out the side door with her suitcase in her hand and just vanished. We hung around the gambling halls, the bus depots, the taxi stands; we called up all the little hotels. After three or four days I knew it was one for a detective, and we went to a guy on Fourth Street that we picked out of the classified phone book, though not anybody the company had ever done business with. He made a lot of notes, took my check for $150, explained there was quite a lot of preliminary expense getting out dodgers for his correspondents, that seemed to be people that kept an eye on cars and so on, and liked to pick up some dough on missing persons and didn't mind a little Hawkshaw excitement in their lives. But his face gave a twitch when we said we had no photograph, and I knew it was going to be tough.

* * *

About a week after that, when I went up one afternoon to take Jane out to dinner, I found her all in, hanging onto herself till her fingernails were cutting the palms of her hands to keep from breaking out into screaming hysteria. And come to find out the bishop's granddaughter was in town and had come to see her about Delavan. It seemed he didn't want to marry her any more, which might explain why Delavan was so nice about it when Jane started her period of residence all over again. "Ed, she was here for two hours—three hours, I don't know, I thought she'd never go. And what can I do for her? She's a frizzle-haired, washed-out, pint-size simpleton. She talks baby

talk. Even when she's trying to be sensible she talks it. And she's been perfectly horrible for Tom. For years and years she's been in his hair, and don't ask me what hold she has on him. He's known her ever since they were children, and God knows what went on. Nothing, probably. She wouldn't have enough gump for something really scandalous. But somehow, maybe because she's so tiny, maybe because she plays on his sympathies or something, that guilt complex of his gets into it, and he's alternately involved with her and trying to break away from her and his life is nothing but a series of runnings away from her. That's all I was. He calls it rebound, but it was more than that. One more lunge at freedom for his soul. That he never gets. Now he's lunging again and she's after him again. Why don't they get married, and give the rest of the world some peace?"

"What did you tell her?"

"That I was sorry."

"Has she seen him?"

"He refuses to see her."

"And she wants you to intercede?"

"And I won't."

"Good."

". . . *Ed!*"

"Yeah?"

"Tom would know about the bracelet!"

"He might, at that."

"Well, she helped, after all!"

She went in the bedroom and talked, and came back looking better. "He says he's sure I haven't had any such thing since he met me, or he'd have known it. He reminded me that he inventoried everything just after the wedding, in connection with a new floater policy for the house, and he was very careful about everything of mine, especially my jewelry and coats, and he's positive there was no such bracelet. And if there's any trouble about it, he's willing to testify, or talk to the police, or do whatever is necessary."

"You didn't actually ask him to go to the police?"
"No, I said if, as and when needed."
"O.K."

* * *

Couple of days later, I was over at a trucking company's offices, trying to close a group deal. Stuff like that is mostly a matter of corporation taxes, and I was lining it out for a bunch of execs in the secretary's office, when a girl came in and said I was wanted on the telephone and that it was important. I took it outside, on her phone, and it was my secretary, Linda. "Mr. Horner, I've been trying to reach you all over town. Mr. Delavan's been killed."

"What?"

"They called us, on account of our card in his pocket."

"Who called?"

"The state police."

"The *state* police?"

"He fell from a horse. Outside of town."

"When was this?"

"They called twenty minutes ago and they're going to call again as soon as they get him back to town. What shall I tell them?"

"I'll take over."

Part Four:

HUSH MONEY

12

TAKING OVER, that day anyway, consisted of sitting in Jane's living room and answering police questions over the telephone, mostly about who would claim the body, stuff like that. He'd been found in a gully after his horse, that he'd rented from the Los Amigos stables just south of town, had come in without him. For some of the stuff they wanted we had to call the family in the east, and Jane did the talking on that, and on breaking the news to this girl he'd been engaged to marry, Faith Converse. Jane called her Penny, but I think that was some moniker they'd given her, on account of her being so small. It took us until five, and they said as neither one of us was with him there'd be no need for us to attend the inquest, which would be held at another undertaking parlor that night. I suggested we drive over to Carson for dinner, and she seemed to like the idea. She had taken it a little hard for a couple of minutes, more from shock than anything else, I think, and then she had snapped out of it and done what she had to do in a quiet way I fell for pretty hard. But on a chance to get away from the hotel and the phone calls, she jumped at it pretty quick.

We had dinner in the Arlington, which was where we generally went over there, and we didn't talk about it, or ourselves, or anything of that kind. I got off on a long educational pep talk about Kit Carson, that the town was named after, and what a terrific help he'd been to all those old grizzlies that were building the West a hundred years ago. But on the way back we got to what was on our mind, and it was she that brought it up. "Ed, you know what this means, don't you?"

"That you don't need a divorce?"

"I've no further business in Reno."

"None at all?"

". . . That's for you to say."

"Then—O.K., you've got business."

"You want me to stay on?"

"Of course I do."

"We can't be married right away."

"You mean it wouldn't look right?"

"It's out of the question."

"Then you stay on, Jane, and we'll ride around and see each other and little by little two or three months will go by and a ceremony will be O.K."

"I'd say about six."

"Then six."

"Shall I write my family?"

"Go right ahead."

". . . Or perhaps I'll wait."

"Why wait, Jane? Write 'em."

"What's not announced doesn't have to be openly admitted. And what *is* announced can't be taken back. Just to avoid complications, I think I'm staying on for the climate. Or the scenery. Or something like that. You've got to admit it's pretty wonderful."

"Anything you say."

I tossed it off like a big shot that had it all under control, but inside me was something moving, like in the shark that swallowed the oyster borer. I had to tell her about that policy, and it would mean she'd know I'd lied to her, and big as the policy was, somehow I hated to get to it. But pretty soon I knew I had to, so I kept right on the big shot line and tossed it out like it was the big surprise good news I had been saving for her all the time. "And by the way, speaking of what's pretty wonderful, there's a wedding present due to drop in your lap, or a dowry, or whatever you call it, that's just about as wonderful as anything I can think of, anyway for a night in late fall."

"Dowry? What do you mean?"
"$100,000."
". . . For me?"
"For cute little you."
"From where?"
"That—policy."
". . . Tom's?"
"You didn't think I really knocked it in the head, did you?"
"But Ed, I haven't it."
"I have."
We rode quite some ways and she didn't say anything. Then: Ed, I wish you hadn't done this to me."
"Made you $100,000, you mean?"
"Behind my back. Why *did* you?"
"Insurance is my life. I believe in it."
"I wish I could believe that was the only reason."
"That's one thing about dough, Jane. It'll do just as much for you whether you work for it or you don't work for it or whether you believe or you don't believe. It's strictly open shop. I'm not ashamed of it that I saw something good, something good for you I mean, and took it even when you told me not to."
"And you told me an untruth about it."
"Hell, I lied. But you'll get the money."
"And you'll get the cup."
". . . What cup?"
"Please, Ed."
"Can't a guy have *two* reasons for doing something?"
"Not if one of them's me."
We went along for a while trying to talk about what a pretty night it was, and how nothing ever looked as bright as lights in the clear Nevada air. Than she began to cry. "Ed, I've been trying to make myself say thank you for what you did. I suppose you had no bad motive. I can't do it. I—just can't."
"I can. I thank myself a lot."
"Then, all right."
"And not only for the money."

"I hope you enjoy the cup."

"And my wife."

"I—don't understand you."

"O.K., Jane, now you get it. I've never been quite sure, if you want to know the truth, about how Sperry got it. O.K., so the dog went over the wall. O.K., so you don't know a thing about the phone call. O.K., but there's the big Sperry policy, and unless they can prove suicide, there's the money. Now I *know* I lied to you about this Delavan policy. You couldn't have had anything to do with it. That clears up a lot of things. Maybe one's not got anything to do with the other, but it's got a lot to do with how I feel about it."

"Ed, *you* suspected me?"

"No, but it's nice being sure."

"Then you did suspect me?"

"I'd have loved you, anyhow."

"You could love me, suspecting—"

"I didn't care."

* * *

Brother, if I could leave it out about the next three hours I'd do it, and if that would be lying, I'd got to the point where one lie more or less didn't seem to matter a whole lot, one way or the other. But there's two or three people that could call it on me, so here goes, but don't get too excited about it if I kind of go easy and not take extra billboard space to advertise what a heel I felt like for a while. It'll be the truth but kind of on the quiet side, if you get what I mean—in good taste, but not any production job, with lights. We rode along, and she kept staring in front of her, and I kept trying to think of something like the Nevada air we could use for talk. We got to the hotel and started through the lobby and Lindstrom got up out of a chair and came over to us. Then he introduced a kid named Kubic that he said was assistant state's attorney. Then he asked Jane to sit down. She did and we all did and he asked if she was

holding a policy on Delavan's life. "I don't, but I understand one was taken out for me."

"Who has this policy?"

"This gentleman here."

"What's he got to do with it?"

I said: "I'm the agent."

"And what are you doing with it?"

"Holding it for her benefit."

"Why you and not her?"

"I'm going to marry her."

It wasn't until the flicker came in his eye that I realized how that sounded, and how it could even tie me in without in any way including her out. "I see. I get it now, pal. And how much was this life insurance?"

"$100,000."

"You putting a claim in, Miss?"

"I don't know."

"You bet she's putting a claim in."

"O.K."

They left and we went on upstairs. When we got to her suite I said: "Well, it's easy to see whose fine Italian hand that is. Mr. Keyes has got into it again, as there's nobody here that knows about that policy."

But she started to tremble, and then she began to cry, awful quivering sobs that nothing I did could stop. And she acted like I wasn't even there. There didn't seem much for me to do but go, so I did. But my three hours wasn't up yet.

* * *

It was after eleven when I got to the apartment house, but the operator goes off and the door locks at ten, so when I saw a woman sitting over by the lobby fireplace it meant she'd been waiting some little while. It wasn't till I heard my name called that I saw it was Mrs. Sperry. I said: "Well—this is an honor. To say nothing of a surprise."

"Mr. Horner, I have to talk to you."

We sat down and I helped her out of her coat. She had on house pajamas, some dark color, blue, I think, and I got a load of the figure. Then she began to talk. "I had a chat with Mr. Keyes today."

"I thought he was in Los Angeles."

"He called me from there. He's flying here."

"Tonight?"

"Tomorrow some time."

"I had supposed he would."

"On this Delavan case."

"He's hipped on the subject that Mrs. Delavan murdered your husband, Mrs. Sperry, and he's probably hipped that she killed Delavan. If she ever murdered anybody, then we're all Chinamen."

"As I've tried to tell him."

"Oh, you've discussed it with him?"

"And I think annoyed him."

"He seemed to like you."

"Until recently."

"He gave you the air?"

"I haven't heard from him at all."

She looked at the fire some more, and said: "Mr. Horner, it would be a great deal better, for everybody concerned, if Mr. Keyes could be persuaded to let this thing rest. I don't know Mrs. Delavan, but she was briefly a part of my husband's life, and I don't relish even the sideswipe of scandal. Is it in your power to have Mr. Keyes taken off this case?"

"It is not."

"Can't you suggest it?"

"I can and I will."

"It won't help?"

"Not if he really tears in."

"What is his interest in it?"

"A $100,000 insurance risk that my company is on."

"And that's all?"

"How do you mean, that's all?"
"If that were paid, would his interest cease?"
". . . Are you willing to pay it?"
"Possibly you don't know. I have some means."
"I heard you were rich."
"I—have some means."

I told her it was the kind of stuff that insurance companies don't like and have to watch close any time they have to fool with it, or think they have. I explained how it was all tied up with concealment of evidence of a crime, and while often a go-between is used on the recovery of stolen jewels, the company is pretty safe as it can always say the stuff they paid a reward for was represented to them as found, not stolen. "On a case like this, it would have to be done through the beneficiary. If she would accept indemnity from somebody else, I think you would have to leave the company out of the deal and she would have to renounce claim by admission of some misrepresentations in connection with the application, or something of that sort, and even that would be pretty hard because she wasn't the one that applied."

"But it could be worked out?"
"I'm not sure."
"But it might be?"
"I don't say it couldn't."
"Mr. Horner."
"Yes?"
"Will you be my go-between?"

Now, believe it or not, what was running through my mind, even after all that Jane had figured out on her, was that it didn't seem possible she could be guilty of anything, and so far as being willing to pay $100,000 to hush it up went, that might look funny in somebody else, but for a woman that had $20,000,000 how funny was it? But by now, she was leaning toward me, where I was sitting beside her on the sofa, in a queer, please-please way, and then I felt something shoot through me. Because, from the look in her eye, I knew if I

wanted to take her upstairs, there was nothing she'd stop at to get me to be her go-between. Then, for the first time I knew, without there being any question about it, she was guilty, not only of Sperry's death, but of Delavan's.

I took her hand and gave it a little pat, and she took mine and gave it a squeeze, and smiled again. I said: "I'm sorry, but I wouldn't touch it, or anything connected with it, with a ten-foot pole."

Her face almost seemed to fall apart, and after a while she licked her lips on the inside, the way people do to keep them from twitching. She said: "But—but—what am I going to do?"

"Get ready to take it, I guess."

"*Take it!* . . . What do you mean?"

"Scandal. Isn't that what you said?"

"Oh. . . . Yes, that's what I said."

"Unless you've forgotten."

She got up, went clumping over to the door like she had lost the use of her legs. I let her out. Then I phoned Jane. I phoned her three times, and each time she hung up on me. The fourth time the hotel operator said the orders were she was not to be disturbed.

13

THE WIRE from Keyes was waiting for me at the office next morning, and around eleven I drove over and met him at the airport. With him was Norton. Not much was said going over to the office, but as soon as we got there, Keyes said: "Mr. Norton, I think you'd better tell Ed what we agreed on coming up."

"Ed, I have bad news for you."

"O.K., so I'm fired."

"Wait now, not so fast."

"My heart's not broke as I told you before."

"Temporarily relieved, if you'll let me talk."

"About the same, isn't it?"

"No, it's not. Keyes has insisted on it, not because he thinks you made a mistake in insisting on this policy, and in fact making an issue of it, as you recall you did, for he thinks anybody has the right to make a mistake, and everybody ought to make an issue of what he regards as a matter of principle. It's not that. But he does feel that you're bound up with too close a personal tie to the person most involved in this to be a disinterested and helpful agent. But if our investigation shows the person most involved is not involved at all, believe me, Ed, you'll be reinstated, and I'm sure Keyes joins me in the wish that that's the way it's going to turn out."

"Absolutely."

"Well, the same to you, Keyes, and many of them."

"Thanks, Ed, thanks."

"What for?"

"Well—it sounded friendly."

"Not if you were listening it wasn't. And especially if you were listening to J.P. here, and what he said about the person most involved. You stupid jerk, don't you know who did this?"

"I think so."

"I don't think. I know. It was La Sperry."
"That's ridiculous."
"She was around last night."
". . . Around where?"
"To see me. To get you called off."
"I don't believe you."
"To buy you off."
"Now Ed, I know it's a lie."
"To buy General Pan Pacific off. To pay that claim."
"What are you trying to tell me?"

"Keyes, how would I know you called her last night from Los Angeles if she didn't tell me? You called her and told her you were coming. All of a sudden you thought this proved that all that stuff about the dog didn't mean anything in connection with the death of Sperry, and you couldn't wait to call her up to say 'here I come.' You did, didn't you? And it was the first call you've made in some time, wasn't it? O.K., she's scared worse of you than you ever were of her, or anything. So the same to you and many of them, but just how disinterested and helpful you're going to be I wouldn't like to say—not in the presence of witnesses."

"Ed, on this subject you're getting unbalanced."

Norton kept looking at me, like he was trying to dope the thing out, and then he reached for the telephone. I had forgotten he knew Mrs. Sperry, but in a few seconds he was talking to her like they used to be pals and then he banged her right between the eyes with it, the offer she had made me the night before. She held him on the line I guess twenty minutes and he talked pleasant and friendly the one or two things he said, but mostly it was "I see," "I see," and some more "I see." When he hung up he said: "It sounds awfully funny that a woman would be willing to kick in $100,000 to hush something up, until you recall how much money Constance Sperry has, and what an awful mess it's going to mean if we do go ahead on this, especially as the papers will unquestionably do everything they can

to drag her in, even if it's only indirectly, as that would blow the story up big."

"Then why don't you take her up?"

"Ed, first let's let Keyes do his stuff."

"Yeah, but will he?"

"Well, Keyes, what about it?"

"Put somebody else on it if you want."

I said: "If you've got any sense you *will* put somebody else on it, and put us *both* on suspension. I'm telling you, La Sperry killed Delavan, as she killed her husband. She killed her husband so she could marry some X guy not identified yet, and I don't think it's Keyes. She killed her husband after an annulment idea fell through and as he wouldn't give her a divorce she had to use a little direct action, or thought she did. What she killed Delavan for I don't know, and how she killed him I don't know, but if you'd only hold everything a day or two until I locate an English maid that seems to know more than she's told, I think I can fill in whatever it is we don't know. I've got detectives trying to find her, and I don't think they'll be so long."

Keyes had listened to this with a face like it was cut out of stone, and what he felt about it he didn't say. But he had Norton over a barrel, because back of it all was the fact that Keyes had been trying to block this policy, and there wasn't much Norton could do now but let him have his way. He thought quite a while, and went out in the ante-room and sat in the spare chair and in a minute Linda came in with me and Keyes to leave him alone. Then after a while he was back. "All right, Keyes, take over. Ed, I'll walk home with you."

We went out and started down the street and in a different tone of voice asked me for the lowdown on Mrs. Sperry, and why I was so sure she had done it. I said: "There's no lowdown, nothing I could prove in court, just something she pulled when she was talking to me last night, kind of a pass she made at me, that only a desperate woman would make, and I'll be damned if I believe people get that desperate over something

like scandal. If that was all, couldn't she leave town? She's got the dough to go to Siam, if she wants to. Keyes, he's awfully proud of himself that he knows, most of the time, without knowing how he knows. O.K., that's how I know now."

"That, I confess, shakes me."

"However, we've got other things to talk about. I still have that policy."

"Our policy? On Delavan?"

"That's it."

We walked on, as far as my apartment, and went up there, and I talked and kept on talking. I told him what had happened on the policy, just as I've told it here, but on certain points I told them over two or three times so there couldn't be any question I was trying to make myself look good. I told it like it was, and he didn't often interrupt. Then I said: "But that's not all. I mailed it to myself, but I won't tell you to what address, and I won't tell you where it is now. Until this thing happened, Delavan's death, I mean, it was a question of something I wanted, the company cup; something I thought was good for her, the protection that I meant to get for her even if she was acting silly about it; and Keyes's nonsense, that got under my skin, and plenty. But it's moved past any of that. It's a question of her—Jane Delavan, I mean, and cops and charges and things I can't even anticipate. It just so happens she prefers not to see me at the moment, and maybe never will again. But on how I feel about it, if it costs me my job, if it costs you $100,000 or $1,000,000, or it costs Keyes his mind, if he's got one—I put her ahead of any of that and all of that. And you might as well know it. I think if anything is done about that policy now, it could boomerang on her—I mean if I took it somewhere, if I turned it in to you, if I sent it to her, if I joggled it in any way. I'm sorry. The company's been swell to me and you have and allowing I don't think he's all there in the head, Keyes has. But on this, I'm rock."

He took a minute or two after I stopped, and I'm proud to set it down here, word for word as well as I remember it, and I

think it's engraved in my mind pretty good, what he said, which was: "I can see, Ed, why you attach importance to this, and in fact seem to be pretty well rung up about it. However, there are two questions in connection with it, and I think you've got them pretty thoroughly confused. The first one is: What should you have done, after you and Keyes came in from the mountains and he had given you his dress rehearsal of the moving finger's drama—when you heard what the cop said about the death at the hotel, and were faced with a decision as to what should be done, about the policy and Delavan's check. I don't in any way follow you as to the horrendous nature of your decision. If you had got Delavan's check back from the post office certainly you would have held onto the policy pending more details on the death, and just as certainly when you found out it was not Delavan who was killed, as Keyes thought, but Sperry, you would have sent the check on again, without Delavan's being any the wiser, and the result wouldn't have been in any way different. For my part, when I was trying to work the thing out I think if there was any doubt in my mind I would have held things up. But on the basis of things as they stood then, I'm not at all sure that I wouldn't have done just what you did, considering I had given you a green light, as I did, and considering how little importance was to be attached to Keyes at the moment, moving-finger previews or not, on account of his imbecile infatuation with Constance Sperry, and the silly monkeyshines he was indulging in on account of it. That, I think, takes care of the first question.

"The next question is what you should do about the policy now. You seem to have some idea I expect you to turn it over to me, apparently under the impression that now Delavan's dead, and the beneficiary has never had the policy, I can escape liability, or that no claim can be made, or whatever it is that's in your mind. In the first place, when we took Delavan's money, the policy's in force, and we're liable. In the second place, if I attempted to avoid liability, it would cost me more than I could possibly gain. It would cost me you, for one thing. Let me do

that and you can't sell for General Pan, that I'll promise you. You're an idealist, a fanatic, on insurance in general and this company in particular. But let this happen and you'll have to move to another company, as you've once or twice told me you might do—simply because as a fanatical idealist you wouldn't believe in this company any more. In the third place, you can rest quite assured that if any fact disclosed by the investigation relieves me of liability, on a suicide clause, complicity of the beneficiary in homicide, as Keyes insists may be the case, or anything else, I am going to deny liability and refuse to pay until a court compels me. I may wish I didn't have to, but I have stockholders to think of, and don't you get the idea I'll be soft-hearted in any way. I'll be tough, down to the last comma of the bond. In the final place, however, which is the main place, so far as I'm concerned—are you listening, Ed?"

"I am, J. P."

"I pay what I owe, period, new paragraph."

His face tightened, as he said that, and I knew that maybe paying what he owed had cost him something now and then, but as I say, I felt proud of him. I didn't feel much better about most of it, because we were talking about terrible things, at least as far as Jane was concerned. But at least I knew I could still call my friend one man that meant something to me. We sat there a few minutes, and he said:

"I'd like you to know, Ed, I had to humor Keyes after his efforts to block that policy, which of course would have saved us the rap, if we'd listened to him. But I came here prepared to pay on the nail, as I've told you I make a practice of doing. He doesn't know it, but there's a cashier's check for $100,000 in my pocket right now, made out to Jane Delavan. I have it with me."

"That doesn't surprise me."

"I wanted you to know."

"That pleases me."

* * *

I ate lunch somewhere, maybe the Bonanza. It seemed funny not to be with Jane, and pretty soon I called her. A woman answered. She said Jane wasn't in. I asked who she was and she said she was taking all Mrs. Delavan's calls. It turned out later she was a nurse that had been called in on account of a crack-up Jane had had, but it hit me in the stomach to be given a brush-off. I left word I had called and went on out to the Scout Ranch, changed into riding clothes, and went on back for the Count. At least I could exercise him, now the situation had changed but there was no way to tell him so. I found him out back, tied up to a post, with Jackie wiping him off. She said hello and to get Red, one of their trail horses, out of the first stable, or she'd do it for me if I could wait a minute. I said: "Well, thanks, he's O.K., but I've got one of my own or have I?"

"You mean—*him?*"

"I do—unless we've all gone crazy."

"Well maybe we have—or one of us, anyway."

She stared at me, and certainly looked like she thought I was slightly off my nut at least. Then she said: "He's had his work-out—all he wants for one day."

"You mean you worked him?"

"Who do you think worked him?"

My heart gave a jump. There was no reason why Jackie should know about the mess things were in, or what was in the envelope she had, or anything that would cause her to fit two and two together. It did something for me, to know Jane had been there, and really was out when I called, and had worked the Count, even if she was busted up with me. But after a while, riding Red up in the hills, I slipped down again, my morale, I mean. She wouldn't let the Count down, whatever happened, or any animal that needed her, so what it proved about me was practically nothing.

When I got in Jackie propositioned me about buying Red and using him. I asked why. "Well, that horse of yours is coming around so pretty, on manners and all, he's practically a sure bet for five gaits in any show from San Diego on up the

coast, and it sure seems a shame for you to begin all over again, and ruin him. Red's a nice horse. You could do with him."

"I'll think about it."

It left me kind of wilted. As property, the Count was mine whenever I claimed him. As horse, he had passed over, and didn't belong to me any more.

* * *

Around 9:30 the outside phone rang in my apartment and it was Norton, wanting to know if he could come over. I said come on and put out highball makings but when he got there he didn't want a drink. He said: "Keyes has found that maid."

"Just for curiosity, how? I couldn't."

"Gas turn-on."

"Gas—?"

"The turn-on slip, on her gas. He figured your detective had probably covered rooming houses, filling stations, hotels, bus depots, and other places people leave tracks when they think they fade out. When there was no sign of her he concluded she was really dug in, in a hideout somewhere, so she wouldn't run into people. That meant a house, an apartment, or something like that. But one thing she'd have to have would be gas. So, as they only get four or five new applications a day at this little company here, it was duck soup for him. She was using a phony name but the turn-on clerk remembered her right away by the Cockney accent."

"Simple, but I never thought of it."

"I never thought of it either, but if it was a needle in a hay stack he'd have some simple magnet sent over and five minutes later Mr. Needle would be hanging to it. You heard of Faith Converse?"

"Delavan's ex-fiancee?"

"She's in it now."

"How?"

"Possible murderess, accomplice, or both."

"Boy, oh boy, J. P., is that one on Keyes?"

"It's thrown Keyes back on his heels, but good, because of course if she did this Delavan job we pay. But I don't mind telling you Keyes is under my skin a little just now, and any little thing that gave him his come-uppance would come under the head of good news, even if it did cost us $100,000."

"Yeah, but say something. About this Converse."

"Delavan gave her the air."

"That's what brought her here."

"Keyes found out all about that as soon as he got Delavan's family on the telephone, to see what they knew, or maybe thought. They knew a little and they thought plenty, and most of it centered on this girl—"

"Known also as Penny."

"That's it. So he's been trying to get in touch with her. But after he called the gas company about the turn-on slips, and I helped out with some comsha so the little turn-on girl would forget the rules and let him have a look, he stepped over to the police department to see the reports on the sale of firearms. The stores turn them in, and he's found that generally, on a real hideout, the party of the first part likes a gun around the house, just in case. So he didn't find anything that looked like it might be Harriet Jenkins in blackface, but he did find Faith Converse."

"*She* bought a gun?"

"A nice little .38 automatic."

"What do you make out of it?"

"Nothing, but I wish I'd never heard of Thomas Delavan."

"That I can understand."

* * *

He began walking up and down my apartment, poured himself a spoonful of Scotch, walked up and down some more. The phone rang. I answered, and my heart skipped a beat when

I heard the same old Cockney voice drop the H off my name. "Yes, Jenkins, what is it?"

"I'd call a doctor if I was you, sir, accant Mr. Keyes. 'E acts very ill. 'E acts seriously ill, sir."

"What's happened?"

"Nothing, sir, but 'e's not 'imself."

"Where are you?"

"At 'is office, sir."

"You mean my office?"

"'E said 'is office."

"I'll be over."

Norton was there beside me, close enough to hear all of it. I hung up and started to call a doctor, but he stopped me. "Let's see what it is, first." That made sense, and in about two seconds flat we had on our hats and coats and were on our way over there.

14

IT WAS Jenkins, all right, but I don't think her own mother would have known her. Instead of the bombazine uniform and run-over shoes she used to wear she had on a mink coat, a good-looking black dress, green shoes, green alligator bag, and green hat, and her face was washed and had nice make up on it, and even her hands were clean. I've told you about the shape. Now, for the first time, she looked like a really pretty girl, and about five years younger than I had taken her for. She was in the ante room, where Linda sits, when we got there, but she took us back in the private office, where Keyes was stretched out on the couch, with his coat off and only the desk light lit. But he said he didn't want any doctor, and would be all right if we'd just let him alone a few minutes. We went out in the ante-room again and I closed the private office door and asked Jenkins what went on. "As I told you, sir, nothing."

"What are you doing here?"

"'E brought me 'ere."

"What for?"

"To tell what I knew about the death of Mr. Delavan."

"So you do know something about it?"

"Indeed I do, sir."

Norton began questioning her, and pretty soon she got pretty gabby. "It was around seven, I should say, when Mr. Keyes came to the little 'ouse I had rented on the edge of town, and I'd noticed 'im at the inquest over Mr. Richard, but 'adn't known 'im and supposed 'im an officer. Then 'e said 'oo 'e was, and when 'e said 'e was interested to go into the exact manner of Mr. Delavan's death, accant 'e was suspicious of it, I was quite willing to speak about it, as I'd about made up my mind already I was going to end my silence and tell what I knew. So 'e remained outside in a respectful and gentlemanly way

while I dressed, brought me 'ere in the cab 'e had waiting, then took me to the room inside there and asked me a few questions, not many. Then in a most friendly and understanding way 'e said 'e never 'eckled a willing witness, and why didn't I sit down to the recording machine and tell my story on the record while 'e went out and had some coffee. So I did, only taking five records to do it as I made it very brief and clear. Then 'e came back and put the records on the machine and listened to what I 'ad said. And then 'e began looking bad. I did what I could. I got 'im water and 'elped 'im to the couch so 'e could lie down and then I rang you. I think it 'ad something to do with what e' was 'earing, if I may say what I think."

"Please do."

"Yes, feel perfectly free."

She sat down in Linda's chair and told it all over again, then noticed Norton doing some more marching around and offered him her place and he took it. He said afterwards he didn't often accept a seat from a lady, but she seemed to have the kind of legs that made it advisable she got perpendicular for a while. Keyes came out and she asked if she'd be needed any more that night. He said she would. The four of us went in the private office and he switched on the dictation machine.

* * *

The first of it was a lot of stuff about how lousy Mrs. Sperry had treated her in Bermuda, and she wasn't quite as brief and clear as she seemed to think. Then there was some stuff about how Jane had taken pity on her and brought her here, 'aht of the goodness of 'er 'eart, and the trouble over the annulment. Then she told about how Delavan took her to court to put her under bail, and then here it began coming, the part that Jane and I could never figure out. It was all full of *ahts* and *hins* and *hopens* and *shahts* and *'earts* and *flahs,* and Linda didn't do anything about them, but anyway, here it is, the way it was transcribed with pothooks from the records early the next

morning. Anyway, if it's not what she said it's what she thought she was saying:

"I was quite frightened in court, until I saw Mr. Delavan looking at me, and I knew he liked me, as I certainly did him. So a day or so later I thought I would see if I could play a little trick on him. So I went to a shop and called him by phone and asked him if I couldn't pay him a visit and talk to him about it. And as I expected, he said: 'Good God, girl, no. If this place is watched it would ruin me. I'd be forever blocked from bringing suit myself, and she could have anything she asked in court.'

" 'Then,' I said, 'why not visit *me?*'

" 'That would be worse,' he said.

" 'Perhaps not. If a young man came up on the Washoe-Truckee roof tonight, just to take the air, and he happened to find a young lady there with the same idea in mind, who could criticize him? It's a fine, open, respectable place so far as the law is concerned, and it has the additional advantage that it's quite deserted from ten o'clock on.'

" 'I couldn't dare risk it.'

" 'Wouldn't you like to risk it, though?'

" 'Shut up, limey, shut up.'

" 'Ah, come on.'

" 'No.'

"But I went up there, just the same, thinking he might change his mind. I waited a long time, in one of the big rocking seats with canvas sides and back, and he didn't come. But as I had just come to the conclusion I would be disappointed, the iron door that leads below slowly opened, and there he was, at first paying no attention to me, but walking cautiously around to make sure nobody else was there. Then he came over beside me, and I told him if he compelled me to be his witness, I would of course tell the truth about Mr. Sperry, that there had been no infidelity on his part with me, but I would also tell the truth about this night on the roof, that there had been infidelity on his own part to his own wife with me. And he looked at me

sharply and asked what I meant by inventing such a falsehood. And I looked at him just as sharply, as I hope, and asked him what he meant by inventing such a falsehood himself, for he perfectly well knew he had overpowered me and torn off my clothes and used the badminton shuttlecock for a gag and worked his wicked will on me. And as I spoke I tore my dress and scratched my arm with one fingernail and showed him the badminton shuttlecock which I had in the pocket of my apron and had wet some time before at the hose tap in the corner. 'It is the truth, and you know it, my young and handsome friend,' I told him, 'and if you don't admit it I shall go right over to the phone there and call the hotel staff and you won't be able to get away before they nab you and my cuts and bruises will substantiate my tale. My very shocking tale, I may say.'

"'But you're not offended?'

"'Not if you let off my bail.'

"'Then perhaps you enjoyed this frightful outrage?'

"'Aren't you the roguish one.'

"'And perhaps an encore is in order?'

"So he took me in his arms, and gave up the idea of annulment, though he didn't tell Mrs. Delavan at once, and when he did tell her, pretended Mr. Sperry had frightened him, as she had told him would happen, for we didn't want it known, the relationship that had sprung up between us. And repeatedly he said how happy he was, and how at last I had set him free from this frightful thing in his life, this woman in the east who he had married one girl to be free from, without success, but now, because he loved me, he felt the shackles had fallen from his heart. And I was happy too, and heard without sorrow the difficulty we would have over money, and how if he married against his family's wishes he would lose even the small income that he now had. For I took that to be his way of saying he might not be able to be married, on account of our different stations in life, and I didn't mind, because I loved him.

"And then one night as we sat there, the iron door opened

and Mr. Sperry appeared with the little dog he loved so, and took with him wherever he went. I hadn't seen him in some time, and didn't know he was in Reno. Mr. Delavan and I kept perfectly still, and when Mr. Sperry went down after a few turns with the dog, we laughed with much enjoyment at how we had stayed hidden. Next night it was the same, except *she* was with him, Mrs. Sperry, and again we kept still, though wanting to laugh. Then, in a few minutes, she sat down on the wall, and he stood nearby smoking his pipe, several times warning her to be careful. Then she said oh damn, and told him her bracelet had fallen and was probably ruined, even if some passer-by happened to pick it up. Then soon she said: 'No, it didn't fall, either. Look, it's caught on the brace.'

"Then he looked and said that was indeed remarkable and she leaned out and tried to reach it, he at once catching her and pulling her back. 'Here,' he said, 'you hold the dog.' He had the dog in his arms, as he often did, and gave it to her. Then he lay down on the wall, holding onto it with one hand and reaching down with the other toward the steel truss that runs over to the neon sign over the street. She still held the dog, but stepped over behind him. Then she stooped quickly, and lifted his foot. Then he wasn't there any more. Then Mr. Delavan had his hand over my mouth to stifle my scream, and the little dog was moaning and she was standing there with her face raised to the sky. 'Thank God,' she said, 'thank the merciful God! It was an accident, you barely touched him, you can sleep this night—but he's gone. Get down to your room and wait for their call! If you go insane, wait for it!'

"And in a jiffy she was gone. 'And we can thank the merciful God too,' said Mr. Delavan ,'that we weren't seen, and won't be dragged in. It was a shocking thing, but there's nothing we can do for him now. You get down, too. Get down there and turn down the bed in my wife's bedroom, or something, whatever you do at this hour. And be sure you ring about something on the phone, so you can prove you were there.'

"'And where will you go?' I asked him.

" 'I'll think of some place.'
" 'Use the stairs,' I said."

* * *

She told how they raced down the stairs to the eleventh floor, she going to Jane's suite to see if Jane was still out, he to the stairs to slip on down and out through the basement without being seen. When she got to the suite she checked that Jane was still out, then called the operator to ask the time and tell her a little joke, she didn't say what, so the girl would remember the call. He went to some club, she didn't say which, and pledged his watch for some gambling dough, so the slip would show the date and the cashier would remember the time. Then he came to call on Jane. It was three o'clock in the morning, and Jenkins was in her own bed almost asleep when the grand scheme occurred to her. She got out of bed at once, went to a gambling hall, and called Delavan. There was no answer, and she went and threw gravel against the window of his room to wake him. Mrs. Sperry, she told him, when he let her in, could pay. At first he was against it, but the more she talked to him about how rich Mrs. Sperry was, and how they could hit her first for $100,000, then keep it up and keep it up, the more he weakened. They went in another gambling joint, rang her awake, and told her they were coming up. So they did, he going into the hotel the way he left it, she going up, in her uniform, in the regular elevator, as though she'd had a late call. She went on:

"She was quite nasty, but changed her melody when she saw we meant what we said. But she said it was out of the question the police should discover he had fallen from the roof. If they ever guessed she was up there, she felt they might guess the truth, so it was agreed that since Mrs. Delavan was out at the time, I could safely place Mr. Sperry in the suite. Little did I know, at that time, that she had contrived the whole thing, the exact spot on the wall and all, and if I may express my own opinion, had placed the bracelet where it seemed to have fallen,

since later it turned out to be Mrs. Delavan's bracelet, all in the way it occurred, with a telephone call and all the rest of it, to implicate Mrs. Delavan and save herself. This we learned much later, when Mrs. Delavan phoned Mr. Delavan about the bracelet and told him of the other things the police were pressing her about. This was when Mr. Delavan and I knew we had to tell what we knew at last, whether it meant losing our advantage or not."

There was a lot in there about getting the little house, and her keeping under cover in Reno, but going to Tonopah and Carson and Truckee in the new clothes Delavan bought her with the first money Mrs. Sperry let them have. The big dough she had to get from New York, by selling securities there, but she kicked in with $10,000 quick. Then at the inquest, Lynch spotted the insurance investigators, and she got scared to death. She thought the cops were the only ones she had to fool, but with an insurance company in, trying to hang it on the very one, Jane, that she had done her best to frame, she could see it coming they might find out the truth. That was when she got up at the inquest and told of seeing him jump. Then, Jenkins said:

"She pleaded with us, when we told her we were clearing up the suspicion she had created against Mrs. Delavan. We were not to be shaken, but we agreed at last, if she paid the $100,000, to say Mr. Sperry was on the roof alone with the dog, that he jumped, so it would correspond with her story, except she could say she had seen it in the dark and thought it was a window, and we could say we had withheld our evidence to keep out of trouble and to save his name from disgrace, as we regarded suicide as a scandalous thing. But then she said she would pay the $100,000 in cash, but as naturally so large a withdrawal would arouse interest at the bank, she didn't want to be seen talking with Mr. Delavan. Would he get a horse from one of the stables and ride over to the spot she described and meet her there? She was most insistent about it, and as the amount was so large and we needed it so badly, he finally agreed and I, fool that I was, let him go."

Her voice got a rasp to it then, and I saw Keyes brace himself. She went on: "And I swear as I sit here that she enticed him to this lonely spot to kill him, and that she did kill him, for with him out of the way it would be my word against hers, and I had already compromised my reputation for honesty by withholding my true story and telling a false one, at the inquest. I have been in hiding since Mrs. Delavan discharged me, but she had her very good reason and always treated me well, and I cannot remain silent, now I know how the affair stands."

* * *

That seemed to be all, and I switched off the machine and for a while we sat there, nobody looking at anybody else. Then Keyes held up one finger for us to hold everything, got up, and reached way over, to the doorknob, and jerked it open. Mrs. Sperry was there in the ante-room, leaning close to the door jamb to hear what went on inside. She came in and looked us over and then went over and held her face up to Keyes with tears running down it. "You wouldn't believe anything this cheap little slut might say about me, would you?"

"Yes, I would and I do."

15

SHE SAT down at my desk, and began to hook it up big on the weep stuff. Then she began begging Norton to pay no attention to anything Jenkins had told us, and kept saying to forget the insurance claim, that she'd pay it herself, that she was really thinking of Jane, because of course Jenkins had only cooked up this tale to shield her and eventually the truth would come out. Norton didn't even look at her, and it was when she went over and dropped on her knees beside him, and took his face in her hands to turn it toward her that we all jumped. Norton said later he knew at last how a man feels when he's out in a cemetery at night and a ghost comes floating up to him. How she got in we never found out, because while the street door was unlocked it seemed impossible we wouldn't have noticed somebody open it, and when she got in we never found out either, but stalking into the room, one step at a time, her eyes focused on Mrs. Sperry like somebody in a trance, and a horrible little grin on her face, was a tiny, pale, queer-looking woman, maybe thirty-five or so, in a black suit with black stockings, black shoes and a black hat. When she began to talk it was in a little high, squeaky, sing-song voice that sounded like some kid reciting stuff in Sunday School. She kept going closer to Mrs. Sperry, one step at a time, and as she moved she talked:

"It may help with him, going down on your knees, but it'll do you no good with me. You got away from me yesterday, but not this time, not tonight. Oh, I knew it was another woman, in spite of the lies he told me, but he wouldn't say who it was, and it wasn't till I followed him yesterday, in the car I rented, and saw him get on the bus, then get off at the riding stable, and come out in boots, and keep looking at his watch before they brought him the horse, that I knew he was meeting somebody. And I got out, and walked over the hill where I could see

the whole bridle path, and there you were, with the golf bag over your shoulder, waiting, and at last I knew what you looked like. Then here he came, and you ducked behind the pinon tree until he had passed and turned off the path into the wash. Then you went after him, running. And I went after you. And when I reached the place you both turned off, where I could see, you were down on your knees to him too, and I was glad, whatever it was he had done to you, that you were paid in suffering for the suffering you had brought to me. Then you both started back, and he mounted. Then you dropped the scarf and he dismounted again to climb down into the gully and pick it up for you. Then you swung the golf driver on his head and ran, and I was cheated, for I was waiting to kill you both, and all that came my way was the horse you slapped and started for home before you went running off toward the golf links. You escaped me then, and it wasn't until tonight, when you went hurrying out of the hotel that I got on your trail again, and could finally track you down. You'll not escape me now—"

Keyes grabbed her handbag and Norton grabbed her. She screamed but Norton held onto her while Keyes took the gun out of the bag and dropped it in a desk drawer. I called the cops.

* * *

In a couple of minutes a patrol car stopped outside and a couple of uniformed men came in. They began working on the little woman, who was Faith Converse, to make her stop screaming and kicking, and the way they did it was take off her shoes. After a couple of stomps in her stockinged feet she quit and began to cry. Then Lindstrom came in and began taking names. Then he listened to the records and while the uniformed cops were still working on Faith to get her in some kind of shape, he listened while I gave it to him what had happened in the gully. He nodded, pretty friendly. "We had it doped out something like that. We didn't know who yet, but

we had a 100 per cent check on the wife all that afternoon. It wasn't her, we knew that. But we'd have had it."

* * *

All this time Keyes was sprawled on the sofa, staring at Mrs. Sperry like somebody sitting up with a corpse. Then he jumped, but he was too late. The report went off like a cannon shot in that enclosed space, but I'm afraid La Sperry didn't hear it. The .38 that Keyes had dropped in the desk drawer was right under her hand, where she was sitting, and she made an A-1 clean job of it.

* * *

By the time the police photographers got through, and Linda got there, and transcribed the Jenkins stuff for the reporters, and they took the body out, and a few other little things had been cleaned up, it was well after daylight, and I was out on my feet, and didn't get up until around four that afternoon. Around five, when I was dressed, there came a couple on the buzzer, and my heart jumped. I opened the door and it was Jane, in her gambling pants, with the mink coat on and the red ribbon around her hair. I was so happy I couldn't talk for a minute, even after she was in my arms. "Mr. Horner, I hear you've a check for me."

"Somebody tell you that?"

"A certain Mr. Norton."

"Yes, the agent likes to deliver it in person. He gave it to me. However, I must say I'm surprised he looked you up."

"He wanted to meet the future Mrs. Horner."

"Shows he's got manners."

She cut out the gagging, then, looked me in the eye, and said: "Ed, when I got it all straight, from what he told me, that at last I've come to the end of it, these things that have dogged

me the last three years, I could have kissed him. But I thought I'd come over and kiss you."

"Then let's begin."

"I looked after your horse, by the way."

"I know."

* * *

After a while we got around to the newspapers that she had with her, and looked at all our pictures, even my picture, that were smeared all over them, and read the story, and then we thought we better go over to the hotel and see how Keyes was making out. He was sitting not far from the porter's desk, where Norton was getting their transportation back to Los Angeles, and if he wasn't exactly what you'd call cheery and chipper, he was anyway quite a lot better. And while he started a long explanation to Jane of why he had pulled what he did, I drifted over to Norton and he gave me the recent developments. It seems there was a bill-fold, an alligator bill-fold, with a coronet burned on it, and initials, that had been turned in at the desk and that he'd been asked about, and it pretty well proved there was a lord or an earl or something who had been staying in San Francisco and visiting La Sperry week-ends. But instead of making Keyes sore, when he got it through his head at last what she'd been up to all the time, it relieved his mind. "Because," he told Norton, "if she'd rather choose the deep end than come to him with a stain on her escutcheon, that proves what I knew all the time, that she was a thoroughbred."

"Kind of a five gaited job," I said to Norton.

"Or anyway five-faced, we could safely say."

So while we were snickering at that, they came over, Keyes looking very noble, Jane patting his hand in a forgiving kind of way. And then Norton snapped his fingers and cocked his eye across the lobby and we all looked. And headed for the dining room, a $40 plumed hat on her head, $40 suede shoes on her feet, a $150 black crepe dress giving the works to her

shape, and the mink coat hanging carelessly off her shoulders, was Jenkins, and a little bit behind her, but not too much behind her, a carnation in his buttonhole and a Swede grin on his face, was Lindstrom, the detective. We all wondered the same thing, whether this was some more police stuff that would mean we could begin to worry all over again, and it didn't take any high sign from Norton to start us all over to the dining room door. But by the time we got there we knew we could quit worrying. The captain was seating them, and he couldn't see it, but we could: Lindstrom was playing footie with her, and she was giving it the old Limehouse leer.

So that's how Jenkins came to live in Reno too, and how Jane, whenever she's got a big party coming on, has just about the slickest personal maid service anybody ever had. We throw quite a few parties, it seems. Maybe that's because we've got a collection of five cups in our trophy room, to say nothing of the Count's first, that I kind of like people to look at. Maybe it's because Jane is a swell girl that likes people, I don't know. Anyway, we're happy, she, I, and the little lady that was waiting upstairs, and that's a wonderful thing.

THE END

THE
ROOT OF HIS EVIL

By

JAMES M. CAIN
(Author of "Love's Lovely Counterfeit", etc.)

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Part I

THE GIRL IN THE BEANERY

One

It is hard to write on the deck of a sloop that is anchored here, off the Bay Islands, for it a swell from the Caribbean doesn't tilt the boat so the typewriter slides off the hatch, then a Bay Islander is aboard, telling about his ancestors, how they are really English and what they are going to do if Honduras tries to collect taxes. So the interruptions are many, but I want to tell my story, partly because to me it is my story, and partly to correct false impressions. Yes, I am Carrie Selden, the Modern Cinderella, but if a girl emerges who is different from the girl the newspapers pictured, then all I can say is that the newspapers printed a great many surprising things, and if they are shown up it is no more than they deserve. My story really begins, of course, with the appearance of Grant, but perhaps I should give some of my background, for it is not true that I was raised in an orphan asylum, and was scrubbing pots in the Karb kitchen at the time I met him.

I was born in Nyack, New York, and I don't know who my parents are, that much of the story is true. Also I was taken in by the orphan asylum, but the length of time I spent there was only six months. I then was taken in by Pa and Ma Selden, before I can remember, and they are the only parents I have ever known. The reason I don't know who my parents are is that the asylum had a rule

that no information about parents would be given out, as it was better that the child have an entirely fresh start when it was adopted, rather than be the child of two families, and not really know where it belonged. But by the time I was old enough to be told that I was not the child of Pa and Ma Selden, and wanted to know who I really was, the asylum was not there any more, having been torn down to make way for a box factory, and I never was able to find but two of the matrons, who did not remember me very clearly, and did not know what had become of the records. Not knowing who your parents are is a matter worth a book in itself, but I shall try not to say much about it, as I do not want to seem self-pitying. However, from my experience and certain traits of my character, I would say I must be Scotch. I am small, with yellow hair that has a touch of red in it, very large blue eyes, and a skin that has a tendency to freckle in the sun, as alas it is doing here on the sloop. My figure is very neat and pretty, and I am a little vain about it. But I am quite strong and nimble, and can do handstands and back flips, and often thought if I had to I could earn my living as an acrobat in a circus. I may as well confess that I am very careful in money matters, and always have been From time to time certain of my friends have viewed this as a fault, and perhaps it is. But to me, money is something to be saved and used, not wasted.

I went to work when I was fifteen, that is, nearly ten years ago, because Pa Selden lost his farm to his sister, when she stood for interest on the mortgage, and while it was acceptable that Pa and Ma come to live with her, she wouldn't have me, as she had never approved of the adoption. So I had to find employment in Nyack, which presented some difficulties, as I had lived on the farm ever since I could remember, was only in the second year high school, and wasn't used to town ways. But as I have pointed out, I have always rejoiced in a strong body, and so was able to take a place as waitress in one of the hotels,

although I had to misrepresent my age as eighteen. The salary was six dollars a week, but the first money I got was a dime tip. This I still have. At first I carried it tucked into a corner of my pocketbook, but now it is made into a little pendant, and hangs on a silver chain around my neck. While at the hotel, I enrolled for night classes at the high school, continuing the regular course, and graduated when I was nineteen. This was a year late, but it is not true that I write my name with a mark, as one newspaper said. I have a high school diploma.

Also, when I received my first salary at the hotel, I began a practice which I have never relaxed, which was to make a regular deposit in a savings bank. At first, I was able to spare only $1 a week, as I had to contribute to Pa and Ma Selden, since Aunt Lorna would not allow them any money for their needs. But after they died, when I had my nights free and could take extra work at the Diamond Cafe, I was able to increase my savings. And then when I came to New York and saw the night deposit boxes maintained by the banks there, I came to the resolution that has been an important part of my life: Let no working day go by which does not represent an amount saved. In New York I made my deposits nightly.

Thus it was that when I became twenty-one, I had a thoughtful day with myself, and decided that bigger things lay ahead of me than could be found in Nyack. This may sound conceited, but I had a little to go on. I had $855 saved up in the bank, representing principal and interest for six years, I had a knowledge of at least one business, and I had an education. So I began to consider New York, and after a trip down there to look around, I moved there, and two weeks later I took employment with the Karb restaurant chain, operating seventeen places in greater New York, in which I had a three-fold object. First, I wanted to enter a service big enough to hold a future by way of promotion, if I cared to remain there. Next, I wanted to save more money, in

case I wanted to start a place of my own. Next, I wanted opportunity to study New York eating tastes, as well as restaurant methods, before coming to any decision at all. I had to start in one of the Brooklyn restaurants, and wait my turn for a Manhattan assignment, but I didn't have to wait long, as I agreed to transfer to the place on Lower Broadway, not regarded as very desirable. As the clientele was mostly from the Wall Street financial district, and as Wall Street is practically deserted after six o'clock, the restaurant did a luncheon business exclusively, so that the girls were only on call for four hours, hardly enough to make much. However, I made an arrangement with a cocktail bar within walking distance, near the City Hall, to work from three-thirty to six-thirty, and that way it came out very nicely. I worked from eleven to three at Karb's, and just had time to reach the Solon and change without an idle period The pay at both places was sixty cents an hour, which came to about twenty-five dollars a week, counting occasional overtime. The tips at Karb's came to about five dollars a day, about the same at the Solon, where although the rush time was shorter the patrons were a little more generous. I got my meals, breakfast and lunch at Karb's, and dinner at the Solon. So, exclusive of subway fare, which has to be subtracted, I made about eighty-five dollars a week in addition to my meals.

I debated where to live, and tried a furnished room for a few days, but there was something lonely about it, and besides I think any girl owes it to herself to live in a decent way. So I made inquiries, and finally located a hotel, the Hutton, on West 58th Street, which catered to women, and had a desirable suite which would shortly become vacant, consisting of living room, bedroom, bath and pantry, for $150 a month. I took it. Then I invited one of the girls at the restaurant, Lula Schultz, to share it with me. Yes, that is how I came to be associated with Lula Schultz, but let me say right now she was not as bad as

the newspapers painted, even if she was a source of much trouble to me.

About the same time I thought it advisable to pay more attention to my dressing, and accordingly began to study the stock of the good shops, and presently bought myself two fine dresses, one for $59.50, and one for much more, more than I care to admit at the moment, but they were so becoming to me, and wore so beautifully, that I think they were worth what they cost. One was dark blue, the other dark green, and harmonious with my coloring. Miss Eubanks, the saleslady who sold me the green, made some hint about shoes, and when I drew her out, she told me that the foundation of all good dressing was fine shoes, which I never forgot. From that time on I paid money for what I put on my feet, but then again I have pretty feet.

* * *

Such was my general condition when I met Grant. I was twenty two years old, strong, healthy and good-looking. I was saving $35.00 a week, I had ambitions for my future. Our manner of meeting was not in the least romantic, in fact the other way around. I remember the day: it was the 13th of August, two years ago, for it was the date of the big organization meeting for the Karb waitresses, as it was the only one of the big chains still unorganized, under a big op deal that had been made by one of the four Karb brothers, one of whom had once been president of some printers' union. Indeed the local we were going to form, and all the big plans for the night, were very much in the air, and the girls could hardly talk about anything else. Personally, I was not greatly excited, but I felt if a union would do us any good we might as well have one, but possibly because I took such an unbiased attitude, the other girls kept gathering around me to know what I thought. Then in the middle of the lunch rush, one of them came back with a tray, and muttered

out of the side of her mouth at us as she went up to the counter, "Company spy, girls, watch your step."

"Where?"

"By the rail, and he's asking me plenty."

"In the brown suit?"

"That's him."

I looked, but what I saw certainly didn't look like a company spy. He was big, and black-haired, and shaggy, and sunburned almost the color of copper. But the rest of them knew at once what he was, and began saying what they thought of him, and then Lula Schultz, my roommate, started for him. "Who do they think they are, snooping around on us? Can't we have a union if we want to? Isn't it in the Constitution or something?"

Lula is very impulsive, that is one of her main troubles, but another girl grabbed her. "Where you going?"

"I'm going to tell the bum where he gets off."

"And tip him to what we're doing?"

"What do we care?"

"You stop that, they'll know everything."

"We going to let them get away with this?"

Then one of them shoved her against the counter. "You stay right where you are. Let Carrie talk to him."

"That's it. Carrie can handle him."

"Sure, leave it to Carrie."

I didn't see that it made much difference what he was up to, but they seemed to place some kind of reliance in me, so it was up to me. One of the girls took the ammonia and cleared two or three places in my station. I mean she wiped the tables with ammonia so the customers that were sitting there had to get up and leave, and another on duty as hostess that day, brought Grant over and sat him down, and I went and put the menu in front of him, and there we were. But if he had been inquisitive about the union, he didn't bring it up then. He seemed to be in a sulky mood, and after he studied the menu he looked up. "What in the hell is Korn on the Karb?"

"Sweet corn on the ear, sir. Would you care for some?"

"No, just asking."

"The corn all comes from our selected farms, and the contract specifies that it must be pulled the morning of delivery, and arrive by special truck. If you like the dish, you might try the Mess o' Karb Korn on the a la carte—three large ears, cooked to order and served right out of the pot. The order includes drawn butter and a Karbtassle brush. It's really quite good."

"It's a socko sales talk."

"Would you care to try it?"

"I'll try it, but no silver handles, no drawn butter, and no Karbtassle brush. Now listen to what I tell you. That corn goes in the pot *in the husk*. Six minutes in the pot, put it on a plate, and bring it over. Give me a double hunk of regular butter, and *that's all*. The idea is, I don't want you to take trouble with it. I want it as is. Do you understand me? No Karbnificence."

"Did you say—*in the husk?*"

"Indian."

"Oh."

"And besides it stays tender. And it stays hot. If Montezuma had 50,000 slaves to serve his table, you could certainly trust him on this."

"Yes, sir."

When I went over to the counterman they gathered around me like flies. "What does he want?"

"Korn on the Karb."

"Boil three, Charlie."

"Not so fast."

I then explained how the order was to be cooked, and Charlie's eyes almost popped out. He picked up three ears in the husk and shook his head. "One for the mule, girls. This is a new one we got."

That was a big laugh, but I kept thinking it was a very peculiar way for a company spy to act So I decided to find out what he was, but first I would have to know his name.

I filled a water glass and went up behind him. As I reached over him to set it down, I spilled a spoonful of it on his shirt, where his coat was hanging open. He jumped, but I had my napkin ready, and before he could say anything I was apologizing and wiping the water off. Then I pretended there was some on the inside of his coat, and began wiping that off. As I did so, I turned down the inside pocket, and there, sure enough, was his name, written in by his tailor. It said, Grant Harris.

I went to the pay telephone, took the receiver off the hook, and came back. "Pardon me, are you Mr. Grant Harris?"

He looked up, very surprised, and I stood right over him, looking down into his eyes so I could see everything they did. "Why yes. Harris is my name. Why?"

"They've been trying to locate you. Mr Roberts is on the line. He wants to speak to you."

Nobody was on the line, but if he went over there and got no answer, I could pretend they must have hung up. What I wanted was to see how he reacted to that name Roberts when I spoke it that way, suddenly, because Mr. Roberts was general manager for Karb's, Inc. He didn't react at all. His face screwed up, and he looked at me as though I must be crazy. "Roberts? I don't know any Roberts."

"He's on the line."

"I don't know him, I didn't tell anybody I was coming here, so it must be some mistake."

"Do you want to talk?"

"What for?"

Not once did his eyes give that little flicker that a man's eyes will usually show when he is trying to hide something, so I felt all the more strongly that the girls were wrong about him. I went to the phone, pretended to hold a little conversation in case he was looking, hung up, and then went and got the corn. I put down the plate, butter, and the little platter with the three ears,

still in the green husks. "May I remove the husks for you, sir?"

"No, thanks, but you can watch, so you'll know how next time."

"Yes, sir."

He began stripping the corn, very neatly, as though he had done it that way often. ". . . Why aren't you watching?"

It came like a shot, and his eyes were drilling me through. They were big and perfectly black, but now they were hard, as I found out they could be when there was reason. "I *am* watching."

"Me, you're watching, not the corn. I've been keeping book on you in that mirror."

"I'm sorry if I—"

"What is this, anyway? What was that phony call?"

Now there is such a thing as knowing when to stop the fooling, and besides I couldn't help having some admiration for the way he had caught me, even if I felt very silly. "All right, I'll tell you."

"Please do."

"They thought you were a company spy."

"Who did?"

"The girls. You asked some questions."

"Oh. So I did. Oh, now I begin to get it. That's why they're all watching us out of the corner of their eyes, is that it?"

"Yes. So they picked me to find out."

"Why you?"

"I don't know. They often rely on me."

"Because you're a pretty slick little spy yourself, maybe. How did you find out my name?"

"I found out all I wanted to know."

"Such as?"

"Anyway, that you're no company spy."

"You sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. I don't think you're anything, much."

I only meant to get back at him for saying I was slick, but my remark had the most unfortunate effect on him. His eyes dropped, his face got red as mahogany, and he picked up the corn and started to eat it. I waited for him to say something, but all he did was gnaw around the corn, with even his neck getting red. I went and got his salad. When I got back, he was almost through his second ear. I picked up the other ear and stripped it exactly the way he had. "Just to show you I really was paying attention."

"Thanks."

"I never had it that way, but it looks good."

"What's your name?"

"Carrie. Carrie Selden."

"Well, Carrie, I think you're trying to be friendly, but you hit me below the belt. What made you say that? Was it just a crack, or did you have something to go on?"

"I had to have *some* kind of a comeback."

"Yes, but I'm thinking of something."

"What's that?"

"Those girls. Why did they pick you out?"

"Oh, they often do."

"Not for nothing. They thought you'd take my measure."

"They just thought I'd be careful."

He looked at me a long time, in a way that made me feel very peculiar, because to me at least there was something unusual about his eyes, something very warm and tender. Then he said: "Well, all I can say, Carrie, is that I find you very baffling."

"In what way, may I ask?"

"Everything about you seems delicate, and flowerlike, except that really you're very cold and knowing."

"I don't think I'm cold."

"Let's get on to this other thing. They're organizing here?"

". . . Why?"

"There you go again, with that fishy look. You ought to do something about your eyes, Carrie. They give you away . . . Why? I'm curious, that's all. I'm no company spy, or anything like that. Just an interested bystander. But *interested*. I've got my reasons. I'm not just talking."

"What reasons?"

His face got very hard and bitter, and what he said next was almost between his set teeth. "Malice. Pure, unadulterated malice. They've got it coming to them, plenty."

"Who is they?"

"All of them. The system."

"I don't see any system."

"All right, I do. The toxholes improve your eyesight, maybe. Anyway, I've got interested in this social reform thing, and I'm going into it. I want to see how it works right from the beginning, and here in this restaurant is a good place to start. I want to see how they go about it, this organizing, I mean. Does that clear it up?"

"You sound awfully sore about something."

"I am sore."

"Well sure we're organizing."

"A.F. of L. or this other one?"

". . . It's not the other one."

"How far has it gone?"

"It's all lined up."

"When does it pop?"

"That all depends. The meeting's tonight."

"Where?"

"Reliance Hall."

"Third Avenue, up near Eightieth?"

"Yes, it's over in Yorkville somewhere."

"Can I get in?"

"If you were a newspaper reporter—?"

"Ah, that's an idea."

"They're letting reporters in later, after the main part is over. I could get you in. Are you a reporter?"

"No, but I could muss up my collar. *Would* you?"

He made that sound very personal, so I quickly said, "Why not?" as though I didn't notice it.

". . . why did you make that crack?"

"If it bothers you all that much, I'll take it back."

"You can't. The truth is, I'm not anything, much."

"Well, my goodness, you're young yet."

"I'm twenty-seven. My farthest worth in the way of accomplishment was to get made a second louie in infantry . . . Napoleon conquered Italy at twenty-six."

"Maybe that wasn't so hot. Maybe Italy didn't think so."

"That's very sweet of you."

The girls lost interest when I said he was a reporter, as that seemed the simplest way out, but I could feel him following me about with his eyes wherever I went. More customers came in, so we didn't get any more chance to talk. When he left, a half dollar was on the table.

Two

I tell all this to refute insinuations that were made, that I knew all about Grant, and took advantage of him from the start. The truth is I knew almost nothing about him, and what was said at our first meeting, it seems to me, proves that he acted very mysteriously with me, from the very beginning, and in spite of many peculiar hints, told me almost nothing about himself, and in fact concealed the main things from me. He did

that, I know now, from modesty, and from being sick and tired of having people get excited over who he was, and from not being able to see that it made much difference anyway, since regardless of who he was he was not what he wanted to be, or even headed in that direction. However, I should like to make it clear that regardless of his motives, he did practice concealment. Now then, why didn't I compel him to be more candid? Why was I content to be kept in the dark? That part I shall explain too, when I get to it, and merely say at this point that there was a reason, equally strong to me as his reasons were to him, and yet nothing I need be ashamed of. I want it understood that until the terrible storm broke, Grant and I were practically strangers to each other, intimate and yet barely acquainted. It set me thinking about social customs in a way I never did before, of the importance of introductions and mutual friends and the various guarantees that people receive concerning each other.

* * *

We had the big meeting that night, and Lula and I went, and I must confess I wondered if Grant would come, which surprised me, for one does not as a rule think much about customers after working hours. Once in the hall, however, I was in the midst of events which transpired so rapidly and unexpectedly that he was momentarily driven from my mind.

In general, I criticize all labor activities for being most inefficient and slipshod, and the meeting in Reliance Hall that night was no exception. There were 473 girls present, as my records later showed, all anxious to organize and get it over with. But just as most of them had found seats, word came that the girls of the Borough Hall restaurant in Brooklyn, who had previously been lukewarm, had decided to join, and were on their way over in a big bus, and that the meeting would wait for them. Why that had to be was never explained.

So we marked time, and there were speeches, the gentlemen from the main council went into a huddle at one end of the platform, and nobody seemed really to be in charge, although a union lady from out of town was in the chair. All this gave time for factions to develop. Particularly there was a girl from the Union Square restaurant, by the name of Clara Gruber, who had a great deal to say about the full social value of our labor, which meant nothing to me, and in a few minutes, a lot of them were yelling for her to be president. This annoyed the girls from the Lower Broadway place, who were going to put me up for president.

So very soon the meeting was split into two groups, one yelling for me, the other for Clara Gruber, and in a very disorderly manner, with names being called. So as soon as I could get the attention of the lady in the chair, I got up and declined the nomination, if indeed there had been any nomination, for there didn't seem to be any rules or motions or anything you could go by. This made things still worse, and the faction in favor of me threatened to secede. So then I hurriedly whispered to Lula and had her get up and say that if Clara Gruber was going to be president, then I had to be secretary-treasurer. My object in this was that I thought if our side had the money, it didn't make much difference who was president. So that satisfied Clara Gruber, and she was elected, and so was I, and we both went up on the platform, and the union lady stepped down, and Clara Gruber began making another speech about the full social value of our labor.

She was interrupted by the arrival of the girls from Brooklyn. And then before she could get going, a little man in glasses came in, rushed up the aisle, and joined the huddle of the gentlemen from the main council of the culinary workers' union. And then he turned around, and without paying any attention to Clara Gruber, he clapped his hands for order, and announced very

excitedly that Evan Holden, the big C.I.O. organizer, was going to speak to them, because on a question of that kind jurisdictional lines should be wiped out, and labor should present a united front. So then in came Mr. Holden, and behind him came about ten newspaper reporters, in the midst of whom was Grant. The reporters took seats down front, but I wasn't paying any attention to Grant at the moment. I was looking at Evan Holden. He was the special representative from International headquarters, and I must say I have rarely seen a more striking looking man. He was over six feet tall, almost as tall as Grant, about thirty five years old, with light hair and fair skin. His eyes were dark grey and very commanding. He had on a light double-breasted suit, which somehow brought out his heavy shoulders and the strong way he was built. But he walked rapidly like a cat.

He came marching up the aisle to the platform steps, and took these at one hop. Then he turned and faced the crowd and the girls began to cheer, so there was nothing for Clara Gruber to do but sit down. Then he began to talk. He didn't talk loud, and he didn't say anything about the full social value of our labor. He started off with jokes, and he had a sort of brogue which I took to be Irish, so in a minute he had them all laughing and orderly, and ready to listen. Then in the simplest way he told us what we were doing, about how Capital and Labor are really in a partnership, but it had to be an equal partnership, so it seemed that all we were really doing was demanding our rights. So pretty soon he had them very excited and then he said he wanted them to pass a resolution which was something about how we would all stick. And in order to get the resolution passed, he turned the meeting back to Clara Gruber, but from the quick way he peeped at his watch I knew he had done his good deed and wanted to be on his way.

But instead of putting the resolution, Clara Gruber went on making her speech right where she was interrupted, and I saw Mr. Holden begin to look annoyed because my faction began to make unfriendly remarks, and take another peep at his watch. But how well they would stick was something that had been worrying me, so I determined to get in it. I said, "One moment, Madame President," and before she could stop me I began making a speech of my own. I had never made a speech, but I thought if the way to get them interested is to tell them a joke, then I will tell them a joke. So I said:

"Once upon a time there were some mice that were going to bell a cat, but when the time came to do it they did not have any bell, but if they had had a little money maybe they could have gone out and bought one."

Instead of making them laugh this provoked a perfect storm, and there were screams from all over the house that it was distinctly understood no money was to be collected. I took the gavel, where it lay on the table, pounded with it and went on: "It has been proposed that you pass a resolution telling how you are going to stick, and I don't know what that's going to prove, but to me it will not prove anything except that you passed a resolution. But if you put up some money, then I'll believe you mean to stick, and so will Karb's and so will everybody."

Clara Gruber tried to get in it again, but they yelled her down. Even her own side was getting pretty sick of her by then. And then there came cries of, "Let Carrie talk. Carrie knows what she's doing. Go on, Carrie, you tell us and damn right we'll stick."

So I went on: "Before I leave here tonight I'm going to collect one dollar off every one of you. The money will be deposited tonight in the Fiftieth and Seventh Avenue Branch of the Central Trust Company, receipt of deposit will be mailed to your president, Clara Gruber, but I'm going to collect it and anybody who refuses to pay is not

going to be enrolled and had better not come around to me bragging about how they are going to stick."

There was a cheer for that, but I talked right through it. "Get out your pencils."

I waited till they got out their pencils. "Now take the leaflets that were distributed and write on the back as I direct. 'August 13th, received of put your name in here —one dollar on account of union enrollment dues.' Write that down, present it to me with the cash and I will sign it and it will be your receipt. Then form in line around the hall, pass by my desk, pay your dues, get your receipt, and be enrolled. While you are writing and forming in line I will ask Lula Schultz to step down to the drug store on the corner and buy me a small account book in order that the record can be kept straight."

Lula went out, and while they were writing and forming in line I noticed Evan Holden looking at me in a very sharp way. Then he came over, sat on the edge of the table in front of me, and leaned down close. "You're a pretty smart girl."

"Money is power. If they mean it, they can pay."

"We generally do it a little differently. The money comes from the outside, from the older locals. But your principle is correct."

"One dollar isn't much, but it proves they mean it."

Lula came back with the account book, and I got up and said they could begin passing by, and that then I thought it would be a good idea if they all went home, as there had already been enough talk. I didn't mean it for a joke, but they all laughed and clapped. He got up, still looking at me. "A smart girl and a pretty girl. Carrie, they call you. What's the rest of it?"

I told him and he said: "H'm."

* * *

I was kept pretty busy for the next twenty minutes, but by the time the last of the line was by most of the girls had

gone home, except for Lula and four or five others from our restaurant, who were waiting for me. But Clara Gruber was still there, and Mr. Holden was still there too, but he wasn't looking at his watch any more, he was looking at me. And then at last Grant came edging up to me. "Hello."

"Hello."

"I got in."

"I see you did. Without any help from me."

"You certainly stirred things up."

"Just saying what I thought."

We talked a few minutes that way, not saying anything, and yet it was nice and friendly. Then he drew a long breath. "Do you suppose we could go somewhere for a cup of coffee or something, or maybe a little snack—there are quite a few things I'd like to ask you about it."

I was just opening my mouth to say I didn't see why not, but Mr. Holden must have been nearby, because he tapped me on the shoulder and then spoke to Grant. "Sorry, old man, but this little girl is going to be pretty busy tonight. We've only just started. Organizing a new union, you know—keeps us hopping."

"I see."

Grant looked disappointed, but I didn't believe one word of what Mr. Holden had said. What more did we have to do? I knew I was between two men who were interested in me, and I wanted Grant to put up some kind of a fight. But I would have died rather than let him know that, so I simply said: "I guess there's nothing *I* can do."

"I guess not."

Next, we were all edging toward the door, and Lula had me by the arm, all excited at what we had done, and Mr. Holden was with Clara Gruber, and I saw him hand her some money. I didn't know what for at the time, but later I found out that he said he thought it would be a good idea if she and the leaders went out and had a little sup-

per together, but that it would look better if she did it rather than he, because she was president. So this appealed to her sense of importance, which was really quite strong, and she fell right into what was really a deliberate trap. Because as soon as we were out on the sidewalk he began waving for a taxi, and as soon as one came up he said: "Come on, girls, we're all going out for something to eat just to start the thing off right." Then he put Clara Gruber in the taxi, and Lula, and the other girls one by one until of course the taxi was all filled up. So then he told the driver to go on, to take them to Lindy's, that we would be right over in another cab. So then they drove off, and he and I got in another cab.

I knew perfectly well he and I weren't going to Lindy's, and under other circumstances I might have made objection, but there was Grant still standing on the curb and looking like a poor fish, and I was furious at him. So when Mr. Holden told the driver to go to the Hotel Wakefield I pretended not to notice, and when he waved at Grant and said, "Good night, old man," I waved and smiled too, just as though it was perfectly natural.

* * *

When the taxi moved off he asked me in the most casual way if I minded stopping by his hotel first, as he was expecting telegrams, and had to keep in touch. I said not a bit, and we rolled down Third Avenue talking about what a fine set of girls they were who had assembled in the hall. The hotel was on Sixth Avenue not far from where I lived, and when we went in there he went at once to the desk. They handed him some mail and telegrams, and he tore one open. Then he came over to me, looking very depressed. "It was what I was afraid of. No Lindy's for us tonight, Carrie. I've got to stand by for a Washington call."

"It's all right."

"But we'll have our supper. Come on."

"If you're busy—"

"Don't be silly. We're having supper."

We went up in the elevator and entered his suite. He at once went in the bedroom and I could hear him phoning Lindy's with a message to Miss Clara Gruber that he had been unavoidably detained and would not be able to come. Then he came back and asked me what I would like to eat, and I said I didn't care, and he went back and ordered some sandwiches, coffee and milk. Then he called to know if I wanted something to drink, and I said thanks I didn't drink. He said he didn't either, and hung up. Then he came back. I was highly amused, and yet I felt some admiration for him. He had intended it that way from the beginning, and yet not one word had been said which indicated he had deliberately contrived to get me up here, and for some reason this made it much more exciting. I began to see that one reason men had previously left me somewhat indifferent was that they were extremely clumsy.

However, he continued to act very casual, and looked at his watch, and gave a little exclamation. "We can still get them."

"Get whom?"

"The Eisteddfod Strollers. They're broadcasting."

"At this hour?"

"It's midnight here, but it's nine o'clock in California. They're on tonight at KMPC, Hollywood."

He went to the radio and turned it on, and vocal music began to come in. "Yes, they're just beginning."

"Who are the—what strollers did you say?"

"Winners of our Welsh bardic contest called the Eisteddfod. They're terribly good."

"Are you Welsh?"

"A Welshman from Cardiff. A lot of us are Welsh in this movement."

"I thought you were Irish."

"The brogues are similar, but an Irishman isn't much good in a big labor union. He's too romantic."

"Aren't you romantic?"

I didn't know I was going to say that, and he laughed. "In some parts of my nature I might be, but not about labor. An Irishman messes things up, fighting for lost causes, exhibiting to the world his fine golden heart, but a Welshman fights when he can win, or thinks he can win. He knows when to fight, and he can fight hard, but he also knows when to arbitrate. It was characteristic of Lloyd George, another Welshman and a fine one. They called him an opportunist, but they won that war just the same. It's characteristic of John L. Lewis. A Welshman is a formidable adversary."

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Lewis?"

"Well, I hope so. I came up through the miners."

"To me he seems very theatrical."

"Like all specialists in power, he knows the value of underestimation of his abilities on the part of his adversaries. The newspapers call him the great ham, and I don't say he doesn't love the boom of his voice. But theatricality is not the dominant side of him. John L. is the greatest specialist in direct action that has ever been seen in the American labor movement, and to that extent I think he has a profounder understanding of labor than anybody we ever had, not even excluding Furuseth, who was a great man. What is a strike? They call it a phase of collective bargaining, but it is really coercion. It suits John L. to be thought a ham, for it distracts attention from his club. The club's the thing, just the same. He has a side though, that not many know about. At heart he's a boy and loves things like jumping contests. He can put his feet together and jump the most incredible number of steps on the front stoop of the hotel, or wherever it is. And over tables —anything. Or could. That was in the old days. I haven't seen him since the row with Murray."

"You went with Murray?"

"Aye, and there's a man, too."

"But aren't we culinary workers A.F. of L.?"

"Oh, there's plenty of fraternizing in areas where there's no real conflict, if that's what's worrying you. There is in any war."

"Are you in charge of our strike?"

"I wonder."

"Well—don't you know?"

"All I expected to do when the little fellow phoned me earlier in the evening, was go over and pull together a meeting he was getting somewhat worried about. But developments since then—"

"Meaning me?"

"Quite nice development, I would say."

He looked me over in a very bold way, and I could feel my face get hot, and I reached over and turned up the radio, as he had tuned it down during some announcement or other. The singing came through again, beautiful things I had never heard before, and I hated it when a waiter came in with our supper, and interrupted it. When the waiter had gone we began to eat the sandwiches, and Mr. Holden came over beside me. For the first time I felt a little frightened, and after a few minutes said: "I'll fix up the deposit slips."

I got out the money and counted it again, and put it in hotel envelopes, and then made out the slips, which I always carried with me. He watched and put the tray outside to be collected. The singers sang a song I loved, "All Through The Night." Mr. Holden came closer to me, and the music seemed to be saying a great deal to him. We looked at each other and smiled. Then he put his arm around me. Then he took off my hat and laid it on the table in front of us. Then he kissed me. I was very frightened, and at the same time I was very limp and helpless. He kissed me again and I felt dreamy and carried away, and that time I kissed back.

* *

I don't know how long I sat there in his arms, but it must have been quite some time, because my dress was all disarranged, and I didn't care whether it was or not, and I kept feeling that this was something I had been hungry for a long time. And yet at the same time there was something about it I didn't like. So long as the Strollers were singing, and I felt sad and at the same time happy, I was very glad about it all, but now there was nothing but swing music coming out of the radio it wasn't the same. I knew I had to get out of there, or something was going to happen that I was not in the least prepared for in my own mind, and that I did not want to happen. I loosened his arms and sat up, and began to shake my hair as though to straighten it out. "Do you have a comb?"

He got up and went in the bedroom. I grabbed my hat, the envelopes with the money in them, and my handbag, and scooted. I didn't wait for the elevator. As soon as I was in the hall I dived for the stairs, and ran down them, four or five flights. When I reached the lobby I ran out of the hotel, jumped in a taxi and told the driver, "Straight ahead, quick."

He started up, and I was so busy looking back to see if anyone was following, and straightening myself up, that I didn't notice how far we had gone. When we got to Fiftieth Street I told him to turn west, because I had to go to the bank before I went home. But it was a one way street going east, and I paid him and got out to walk the one block to Seventh Avenue. I got to the corner, turned it, and started for the night deposit box. As I did so, somebody grabbed my arm from behind.

I jumped, shook loose and dived for the deposit box. I flipped the envelopes in, spun the cylinder, and turned around. If it was a bandit, I was going to scream. If it was Mr. Holden, I didn't know what I was going to do. It wasn't a bandit, and it wasn't Mr. Holden. It was Grant standing there and looking very sheepish. "I had an idea that money would be deposited."

"My, you frightened me."
"Feel like a walk?"
"It's terribly late."
"It's two o'clock about the only time you *can* walk in this God-awful town. But that isn't the real reason."
"And what is the real reason?"
"You."
"Why didn't you say so?"

Three

We began to walk over toward the East River, but I wasn't any too friendly because while I was really glad he was there, I couldn't forget the way he had let me be dragged off from the hall without doing anything about it. So he began asking questions about the union, which I answered as well as I could. It was rather hard to explain it to him, however, as he apparently thought there had been a lot of preliminary phases, as he called them, all occurring in some extremely complicated way, although all that had happened was that some of the girls had become dissatisfied with conditions, and when they found out about the big op deal that had been made, had themselves gone to the union for help. Then the word was passed around, and one thing led to another, and it all happened very quickly with hardly any of the elaborate preliminaries that he seemed to think were involved. He kept asking me if I had read this or that book on the labor movement, but I hadn't, and didn't even know what he was talking about. So he died away pretty soon, and then he said: "I guess that about covers it. It's what I've been trying to find out."

"Then I'm very glad to be of help, if that's what you

wanted because if it was really me you were interested in you took a strange way to show it."

"Well—here I am."

"Rather late, don't you think?"

"I told you. I like it this time of night."

"Between this time of night and that time of night three very fateful hours have elapsed. A lot can happen in that time."

"Happen? How?"

"There are other men in the world besides yourself."

"They don't start anything at Lindy's."

"I haven't been to Lindy's."

"You—?"

"Some people are more enterprising than you."

He stopped, jerked me by the arm and spun me around. "Where have you been?"

"Never mind."

"I asked you where you've been."

"With a gentleman at his hotel, if you have to know."

"So."

We went along, he about a half step in front of me, his head hunched down in his shoulders. Then he whirled around in front of me. "And what *did* happen?"

"None of your business."

We had reached Second Avenue by that time. He looked at me hard and I could see his mouth twitching. Then he turned around with his back to me and stood at the curb. I waited and still he stood there. "I thought we were taking a walk."

"We were. Now we're waiting for a cab."

"For what purpose, may I ask?"

"To send you home. Or to a gentleman at his hotel. Or wherever you want."

"Very well."

We stood there a long time, and still no cab came by, for it must have been getting on toward three o'clock. He lit a cigarette and something about the fierce way he

blew the smoke out made me want to laugh. But I merely remarked: "If anything *had* happened I hardly think I'd be out here at this hour and under these circumstances—at least not *this* night."

"Why not?"

"I don't do things by halves."

I couldn't help saying it, he looked so silly. He sucked at his cigarette and the light came up very bright. Down the street a cab appeared and when it got near us it cut in quickly and slowed down. He threw away his cigarette and waved the cab on. "We were taking a walk, did you say?"

* * *

We got over to Sutton Place and stood at the rail watching the sign come on and off, across the river. A fish flopped and we waited a long time hoping to see another. It was so still you could hear the water lapping out there. But no other fish appeared, and we started back. He hooked his little finger in mine and we swung hands, and it wasn't at all expert, but it was sweet and there was something about it that was exactly what hadn't been there on the sofa with Mr. Holden. A cop came around a corner, and we broke hands, but he said: "Don't mind me, chilluns," and we laughed and hooked fingers again. We came to a place where the sidewalk was barricaded over a water pipe or something, with two red lanterns on each end. Grant let go my hand, put both feet together and jumped over, then turned around to see what I was going to do. I pulled my handbags up over my wrist, took hold of my dress and held it away from me so it wouldn't fly up over my head, and then did a kind of one hand cartwheel over the barricade. I came up right in front of Grant and made a little bow. He stared at me, then took me by the arms and pulled me toward him, and I thought he was going to kiss me but he didn't. He just kept look-

ing down at me and his voice was shaky when he spoke. "Gee, you're swell."

"Am I? Why?"

"I don't know. Nobody else could have done that. Coming up cool as a cucumber that way with no foolish squealing or anything. And you've got no idea how pretty you looked going over, I mean."

"That was nothing. I can turn back flips."

"I believe it."

We got to the Hutton and there was no doorman out there or anything, at that hour, and we stood there under the marquee for a minute. He took my arms again and seemed to be thinking about something. "Are you going to be down there today for lunch, I mean?"

"Yes, of course."

"Can I come in?"

"It's a public restaurant."

"There's something that bothers me."

"What is it?"

"I want a certain half dollar back."

"Why?"

"I want it back. I don't want to feel that we started with me giving you a half dollar."

"Have we started?"

"I don't know what we've done. But I want it back."

Now that half dollar was much on my mind up there in the room with Mr. Holden. Because when I made out the slips for the union money I also made out the slip for my own regular deposit, and ordinarily that half dollar would have gone right in the pile with the rest of it. But for some reason I had kept it in the coin purse of my handbag. "How do you know I still have it?"

"Well, then—*if* you still have it."

"All right, then, I kept it. But I want it."

"Is that why you kept it?"

"It might be."

"All right, then, we'll make an agreement. *I'll* keep it. But I want it back."

"Very well, but I want *something*."

He looked a little funny, but fumbled around and then handed over his gold tie clip. "It—it seems to be about the only thing I have."

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid that won't do."

I then held up my face in a very fresh way. He caught me in his arms and kissed me, and was very clumsy about it, but I kissed him back and held him there a long time. Then I drew back, and just before I skipped into the hotel I held out my hand and left the half dollar on his fingers.

* * *

I had to walk up, and when I went in our suite I didn't turn on the light and went carefully on tiptoe so as not to wake up Lula. But then I jumped because I could see her there, her eyes big and terrible looking. I snapped on the light. She was sitting in her kimono facing the door and staring at me without saying a word. I spoke to her, and she began using dreadful language at me in a kind of whisper. "But, Lula, what on *earth* is the matter?"

"You know what's the matter!"

"I don't even know what you're talking about."

"And you know what you been doing!"

"I haven't been doing anything."

"Oh, yes, you have." And she launched into the most terrible imaginary account of all that had taken place between me and Mr. Holden, and why I didn't go to Lindy's, and a great deal more that I prefer to forget. I thought it best to say that Mr. Holden had only wanted to take his calls, and talk a few plans with me while he was waiting, and that I had only stayed with him a little while anyway. "And, besides, I don't see what you have to do with it. I don't try to come between you and any of

your friends, and certainly you have plenty of them." Which was the truth because Lula was not at all particular where men were concerned, and certainly went out with them a lot.

But nothing I could say had any effect on her, and she kept it up and kept it up, and it was easy to see that she was afflicted by some kind of jealousy which I didn't understand and still don't quite understand. But I think she had some kind of motherly feeling about me because she was several years older than I was, and it upset her to think I had at last taken some step with a man, as she assumed I had. She kept raving until long after daylight, and we got a call from the desk that we would have to keep quiet as people were ringing to complain. I didn't close my eyes until the sun was shining in the windows, and then when the nine-thirty call came I was almost dead from lack of sleep, but Lula wouldn't get up at all. "But Lula, you've got to go to work. And it'll look bad if somebody isn't there, the very day after we formed the union."

"To hell with the union."

"But we've all got to do our part."

"What I care about the union? Go on, let me sleep. Go on down and see your friend Holden. Stay out all night with him, stay out every night with him, do anything you please—but let me alone."

I went to work, and Lula didn't come, and I said she wasn't feeling well, and when I got back that night the hotel said she had gone and hadn't left any forwarding address. She didn't show up for work again. I would like this episode kept in mind, for it was the thing that caused most of my trouble later on, and if it had not been for Lula perhaps none of the rest of it would have happened. Or perhaps it would, I don't know. But Lula was certainly a large part of it.

* * *

Grant came for lunch that day, and the next, but was prevented from seeing me at night because of the tactics of Mr. Holden who didn't exactly take charge of us, or quite get out but kept having meetings at his hotel suite. He insisted that I attend every night, and Clara Gruber, and the girls from all the restaurants in the chain so that, as he said, we could discuss the minimum basic agreement we were going to demand from the company. Some wanted one thing and some wanted another, for example, seventy-five cents an hour wages, with "Please Pay Waitress" instead of "Please Pay Cashier," as it was felt the tips would be bigger if the waitresses presented the change, as they do in the hotels and higher class restaurants, and free uniforms. But I could see objections to all of these, from the management's point of view, and I didn't believe we could obtain them. What I wanted was the same hourly wages as we had, as what the restaurant paid us was only a small part of what we made anyhow, with a straight ten per cent charge for tips, as they have in a number of restaurants, with a minimum tip of twenty-five cents. Because in the first place it would be the customer who paid this, rather than the restaurant. And in the second place, it would come to more than the system we already had because what cut our tips down was the people who sat around for a long time occupying the chairs in our station during rush hour, and then leaving a dime tip. So I thought my plan would yield us quite a lot more, without costing the restaurant anything.

However, the others, and especially Clara Gruber, were all hot for *making* the management pay, and to my great surprise, Mr. Holden seemed willing to do whatever they wanted. This I could not understand until we were having some coffee in a restaurant one night, after the other girls had gone home. If he was going to see me alone, I had insisted that we go out. My running away that night, by the way, he had merely taken as a sort of joke and intimated that he would make progress with me yet. As

to that, I had my own ideas, so I usually led the talk around to the union and our demands. His attitude he explained one night, first giving me a long wink, "Demands are poetry."

"They're what?"

"I'm surprised at the narrow limits of your soul. Let the girls demand. It expands their natures, makes them feel good, acts as a fine, stimulating tonic."

"But they won't get their demands."

"Oh now you're speaking of settlement. That's reality."

"Isn't it *all* reality?"

"Not at all. They demand the stuff that dreams are made upon. They settle for what they can get."

"But that way we're sure to have a strike."

"No doubt we are."

"But that's terrible."

"Think, my pretty friend it's August."

"Well?"

"It's hot. And a strike makes a holiday."

"They give vacations."

"Two weeks at Brighton, with mosquito bites. But a strike—there's something real. They have speeches and parades and lofty thoughts, and patriotic music."

"My but you sound cold-blooded."

"The main thing to remember in all labor matters, the point they all forget about, is the state of the weather. Cold-blooded? It's you that's cold-blooded, thinking always of the money. I remember that workers are human."

"They'll lose their wages."

"If they drew their wages, would they have their wages, will you tell me that? If they wind up broke in any case, why not have fun? Besides, it solidifies the union spirit."

"It's—wasteful."

"Your pretty dress is wasteful, for the matter of that."

"But it's *pretty*."

"So is a strike, in its way—a lot of girls, finding the

courage to lift their heads at last. Perhaps they don't get all they want, but they had the fun of a fight. There's an element of beauty in it."

"To me it's just foolishness."

"Are you never foolish, Carrie?"

"Not willingly."

"A little folly would become you, I think."

* * *

The Saturday following our first meeting Grant came in for lunch again, and sat there very moody and didn't eat any of his Korn on the Kaib, although the way he wanted it was rapidly becoming a restaurant joke. Then he wanted to see me that night, but I couldn't, and then he proposed that we spend the next day, which was Sunday, on the Sound. He said he had the use of a shack near Port Washington and a boat, and we could have a good time. Well, I thought, why not? I was all alone in the hotel now, and besides it was very hot. "Very well—if we get back by night."

"You have a date?"

"No, but there's a big meeting."

"Oh, the union."

"I'm an officer, you know."

"So you are. All right, I'll have you back in time."

So on my way up to the cocktail bar, I hurriedly bought a little sport dress and hat, a bathing suit, slippers and beach robe. Sure enough, next morning at nine o'clock the desk phoned that a Mr. Harris was in the lobby, and I went down wearing my sports outfit and carrying the beach things in a little bag that went with them. I supposed we were to take a train at Grand Central, but he had a car out there, a nice-looking green coupe. It was very pleasant riding along without any train to think about, even if the traffic was so heavy we could barely crawl. It was about eleven o'clock when we reached the

shack, which was on a bluff above a little cove, with steps leading down. Well, he called it a shack, but I would have said estate, for it was a very fine place, with luxurious furniture on the veranda, and a big hall inside with a grand piano in it and soft chairs all around. I couldn't help expressing surprise. "Did you say you just—borrowed this?"

"Belongs to some friends of mine."

"Do all your friends have such places?"

"I hope not. Some of them actually have taste."

"It's very luxurious."

"And very silly."

Now all of this was a complete evasion, as you will see, and I put it in to illustrate once more that during this period Grant was never frank with me. Also, he at once changed the subject. "What do you want to do? Swim, sail or eat?"

"Well—can't we do all three?"

"That's an idea."

He took me to what seemed to be a guest bedroom, showed me the bath and anything I might want, and went. I changed into my swimming suit, put on my slippers, and tied a ribbon around my hair. Then I put the bathing cap into the bag, slipped on my beach robe, and went out. I thought I looked very pretty, but I forgot about that when I saw him. He was ready and standing at a table flipping over the pages of a magazine. He had on a pair of faded blue shorts, big canvas shoes, and a little wrinkled duck cap with a white sweater over his arm. But he looked like some statue poured out of copper, and the few things he had on hardly seemed to matter. The deep sunburn was all over him, but that was only part of it. He was big and loose and lumbering, and yet he seemed to be made completely of muscle. The hunch shouldered look that he had in his clothes came from big bunches of muscle back of his arms, and in fact his whole back spread out like a fan from his hips to his

shoulders. His legs tapered down so as to be quite slim at the ankles and altogether he looked like one of the Indians he was always talking about. He turned, smiled and nodded. "Ready?"

"All ready."

"Come on while we still have a breeze."

He picked up a wicker basket and started for the veranda. I said "Is that our lunch? Where did it come from?"

"We brought it with us."

"I thought I'd have to fix it."

"It's fixed."

I took hold of the handle too, we went out on the veranda, he picked up a paddle that was standing against a post, and we went down the steps of the bluff to the beach. The lunch he put in a little skiff that was pulled up on the sand, then he dragged the skiff to the edge of the water and motioned me into the bow. He gave it a running push and jumped in very neatly. Then he picked up the paddle and paddled out to a sailboat that was moored to a round white block of wood that he called a buoy. He made the skiff fast to a ring in the buoy, and we climbed into the sailboat. It had no bowsprit or anything, just a mast that went straight up from the bow, with one big triangular sail. He set down the basket, unwound some rope from a cleat, and began to pull up the sail. I helped him, and it took about a minute to get it up, and the boat swung slowly around and the sail began flapping in the wind. It was quite exciting. Then he went to the bow and cast loose, but held onto the short mooring cable that was attached to the buoy. Then he made me come and hold it, first showing me how to hold onto a cleat with the other hand so as not to be pulled overboard. Then he went back to the tiller. "All right, I'm going to put her over, and for just one second it'll slack. When it does, let go."

He put the tiller over, and the boat gave a lurch and

all of a sudden I felt the cable slack. I let go, and when I looked up we were moving away from shore, toward the other side of the cove, with the sail out over the side, but still flapping. I climbed back to the middle of the boat. He kept watching and then he stood up. "Now I'm coming about. She'll go into the wind, the sail will flap like hell, then slam over, and for God's sake duck for that boom."

Suddenly he put the tiller over, the boat began to swing around and the sail set up a terrible flapping. Then without any warning it slammed across the boat, and I saw the boom coming and screamed and ducked. Then the sliding pulley to which it was attached by some ropes slid as far as it would go and caught it, and it filled, and the boat heeled over so far I thought we were going to upset. Then I saw we were pulling out of the cove very rapidly. Then the first swell from the Sound hit us and lifted us, and all sensation of being afraid left me, and I realized that for the first time in my life I was sailing, the way I had read about in books. I clapped my hands, and he laughed. "You like it?"

"I love it."

Four

We sailed quite a little while, and then he came about, and payed out some of the rope that held the sail, and we began to move again, but we didn't heel over. "Are we going back?"

"Just keeping in sight of home base."

"Make it tilt. I like that."

"We're running before the wind. We only heel over when we've got it across us. And it's a she."

"Oh, yes, of course."

It wasn't exciting the way it was before, but the water was smooth and green, so it was still quite pleasant. After quite awhile, he said, "Now, how about that lunch?"

"I'll get it ready."

"We'll both get it ready."

"But you'll have to steer."

"Steer what?"

"Why—her."

"You're the funniest sailor I ever saw. Haven't you noticed that for the last fifteen minutes we haven't had even the sign of a breeze?"

"Oh, *that's* why the water's so smooth."

"Yes, so now's our chance to eat. She'll drift, without much help from us."

* * *

So he kept one hand on the tiller, and we opened the lunch, sitting in the shadow of the sail. It was marvelous, with little thin sandwiches, stuffed eggs, and iced tea in thermos bottles. Every sandwich was in a little paper envelope marked: Loudet, Caterer. "Do you always deal with a caterer?"

"Him? Oh, he's just a Frenchman that puts up lunches."

"Rather expensive, I imagine."

"Is he?"

"So I judge. And I know about sandwiches."

"They're all right?"

"I'll say."

"Then eat 'em."

So we ate them, and then he lay there with his arm over the tiller and his eyes closed, smoking a cigarette. It was so hot little beads of sweat were dotted all over

his upper lip, and not far from us were several other boats, their sails just hanging there as motionless as we were. But the water looked green and cool, and I longed to be in it. I got up, took the bathing cap out of my bag and put it on, then slipped off the beach robe and dived off. It felt so nice down there, and looked so pretty, with the sunlight filtering down, that I began to swim under water, and stayed down until my breath gave out and I had to come up. I looked back to wave at him, and to my surprise I was quite a distance from the boat, and he was standing there, his hand still on the tiller, swearing at me in a way I wouldn't have believed him capable of. He ordered me back at once, but I took my time, and finally he pulled me over the side. Then he explained that I had done a very dangerous thing in going so far, as a sailboat can't be maneuvered like a motorboat, and especially requires that one person always remain aboard it. So if anything had happened, and he had had to go overboard after me, a puff of wind might drift the boat away, and there both of us would be, out there in the Sound, two miles from land. I knew he was right, but didn't feel at all guilty, so I merely made a fresh remark: "And besides, the water is nice."

He sulked for a time, then unwound a rope and dropped the sail, then took another rope and tied it to a small wooden grating on the bottom of the boat and dropped the grating overboard, so it trailed in the water. "What's that?"

"That's our lifeline, so we don't get separated from our ship."

"How would we get separated from our ship?"

"Swimming."

"Are we going to swim?"

"Didn't you say the water was nice?"

He lifted his foot, put it square in the middle of my chest and pushed me over backwards. When I came up he was in the water beside me. We both laughed and

splashed water at each other, but he made me hold onto the lifeline, and wouldn't let me swim off at all. I didn't mind. We both held onto the rope and floated side by side, looking up at the sky. Then he went under me and and when he came up he floated facing me, so my head was at his feet, and our hands came together under water. I could feel his toes sticking out behind my head, but my toes stuck out near his ear, as he was a great deal taller than I. I moved my toe in front of his face and wobbled it, and he pretended he was going to bite it. So I pulled it away quick, but that pulled me off balance, and when I got straightened out again we floated for a little while, facing each other. Then he gave my hand a little tug, and my toes went past his head and his face began to come nearer and nearer. We hardly moved but our lips met and then he put his hand up to keep me from floating past him, and we lay there, his face against mine, just looking up at the sky. Then a swell lifted us, and to me it was heavenly, but he whipped away from me as though he had been shot. He looked off to the west and then began going up the rope, hand over hand, and he was hardly in the boat before he motioned to me and pulled me in after him. "Get all that stuff in the basket. Hurry up."

I still didn't know what was bothering him, but there seemed to be a great deal of activity in the boats that were near us. A man on the nearest one yelled at Grant. "What you going to do?"

"I'm going to run for it."

"You can't make it. I'm riding it out."

"Suit yourself. I'm going to run."

I was much mystified, and did as I was told, getting all our things in the basket, and yet I noticed that the water, while it was still green and the sun was out, was running long swells. By this time Grant was laboring to get up the sail. Pretty soon it was up and while there didn't seem to be any wind, it was flapping in a queer

sort of way. He came back and put the tiller over, and suddenly we came about. The sail filled with a jerk, and once more we were running before the wind, except that this time we were lifting along with big swells that went past us, and yet carried us along. As we went past the nearest boat they were dropping the sail and running around highly excited. The man again called to Grant. "You can't make it, you'll crack up sure as hell on that shore."

"All right, so I crack up."

"Well, will you please tell me what it is?"

"Squall."

He was very grim, but except for the water I couldn't see any signs of a squall. Then, however, all of a sudden the sun wasn't shining any more and almost at once it turned cold as an icebox. Between the time Grant first ran up the sail and the time it turned cold was five or ten minutes, as well as I can remember. We had been about two miles offshore, and now we had covered about half that distance, headed for a point somewhat beyond the mouth of the cove. He put me at the tiller and went to the foot of the mast. "Hold her just as she is."

I held her and he kept looking back, and I heard him mutter: "Here it comes." I looked back and there on the water was a long streak almost completely black, and approaching us at a terrifying speed. When I looked again at Grant he was throwing a rope off a cleat, and the sail came piling down on the boom. He leaped back where I was and began hauling at the rope that held the boom. It came in with the sail dragging in the water, and just as it was in and Grant was wrestling the wet sail into the boat, it hit us. It was like a hurricane, with a splatter of big raindrops mixed with it, and the swells that were racing past us suddenly turned foamy white.

"Put her down!"

He pushed the tiller hard over, and we lurched straight for the cove, the wind and swells carrying us along with-

out any sail at all. The mouth of the cove, I would say, was about a hundred yards away, and we covered the distance in almost no time, scudding rapidly past the grass which was flattened down on the water by the wind and looked white, not green, as indeed everything looked queer, for while it was almost dark a peculiar light seemed to be everywhere. As we entered the cove the first lightning flash came, followed almost at once by a clap of thunder. Not far away I could see our buoy, with the little skiff bouncing up and down on the waves. He took the tiller and pointed for the buoy, yet not quite for it. "Hold her that way till I tell you, then put her up, *hard*. Have you got it? I want to overshoot the buoy, then hit it upwind."

"I've got it."

He went to the bow and lay down with his head hanging over. I headed as he said, and we bore down on the buoy at terrifying speed. When we were almost on it, and yet a little to one side, he called, like a shot: "Put her up!"

I jammed the tiller over hard, and we came lurching around on the buoy, with the swells slamming us sidewise. Then we seemed to hesitate for a moment, but that was enough for him. He made fast, and we whipped around so the boat strained on the mooring cable with a jerk that almost threw me overboard. The wind tore at our faces and the little skiff began slamming and bumping alongside. "Come on!"

He grabbed the basket, we jumped into the skiff, and he cast off. He grabbed up the paddle, and spun us bow on to the shore. It was out of the question to paddle for the foot of the stairs for the wind was driving us about fifty yards farther down, and he didn't even come back to the stern. He stayed in the bow using the paddle to keep us headed right, and it was only a few seconds before he jumped overboard, grabbed the bow of the skiff and ran it up on the shore with me, the basket, and all right in it. "Out!"

As I jumped out the sheet of rain hit us. He grabbed the basket and we raced into the rain for the stairs, then up and over the grass to the veranda. Lightning and thunder crashed as we ran up the stairs. We stood there panting and looking out at it.

When he got his breath he turned to me and half laughed. "Were you scared?"

"No."

"I was."

He put the paddle away, then carried the basket inside and I went in too. Suddenly he dropped the basket and caught me in his arms. "So scared, Carrie—I didn't know what to do."

"On account of me?"

"Who else?"

Next thing we were sitting on the big sofa, and he was holding me very close and we were watching the rain come down in sheets. He took off my bathing cap and began running his fingers through my hair. I pulled off the ribbon and it fell all over his bare shoulder. We sat there a long time that way, and every time the thunder crashed I was a little nearer to him and I felt terribly happy and didn't want it ever to stop raining.

* * *

But it stopped, and the sun came out and when we went outside to look at the rainbow there were the Sunday papers, all wet and soggy on the grass where we hadn't seen them in the morning. We took them in, and the middle sections weren't so wet, and we looked at them for a while and then turned on the radio. I went to the powder room to straighten up—then decided to dress, and went to the bedroom where my things were. When I came out he wasn't the same any more. He began marching around, then said he had to stow the sail, and went out.

I felt it had something to do with the radio. I turned it on and noticed the station, but Bergen was on and that didn't seem to explain anything. The sail took a long time. When he came in he went in and changed into his regular clothes, then came out and kept up that restless tramping around.

By now it was getting dark and I kept thinking of the meeting. "Isn't it time for us to be starting back?"

"Is it?"

"It must be getting on toward seven o'clock."

"H'm."

He sat down and began to glower at his feet. "I've been organizing a junior executives' union. Or trying to."

I didn't think it was at all what had been bothering him, but just to be agreeable, I said: "Are you a junior executive?"

"Me? I'm nothing."

"Oh, I see."

"Yes, I'm a junior executive. God help me. I've got a desk, a phone extension and a title Statistician. You can't beat that, can you? It sounds as important as a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission. But all I can make out of it is slave. In the Army we had slaves and overseers, and I was both. Here I'm one, but I'm supposed to pretend I'm the other. But I've accepted my lowly lot. Did you hear me? I've accepted it."

"I don't accept my lowly lot. I'm nothing too. I'm only a waitress, but I have ambitions to be something more."

"The emancipated slave wants to drive slaves."

"All right, but they can get emancipated if they've got enough gump."

"But you still see no objection to slavery."

"It's not slavery."

"Oh, yes, it is, yes, it is."

"To me, it's work."

"Suppose you wanted to do work that didn't pay, and yet they made you be an office worker?"

"All real work pays."

"Oh, no. That's where you're wrong. Some work doesn't pay. And yet you want to do it, and you can choose between going to them with your hat in your hand a junior executive. Either way you're their slave."

"Whose slave?"

"All of them. The system."

"I don't see any system. All I see is a lot of people trying to make a living."

"Well, I see it. And I accept it. But I'm going to make them accept it too—accept the other side, show them there's two sides to it. I've been trying to organize a junior executives' union."

"Any success?"

". . . No!"

"Why not?"

"They won't admit they're slaves!"

"Maybe they're not, really."

"Maybe the dead are not dead, really. They want to pretend they're something they're not white collar workers thinking they're part of the system, on the other side. They think they're going to be masters, too—"

"Like me."

"Like you, and a fat chance—"

"You can just leave me out. I don't want to drive any slaves, but one day I'm going to *be* something, and I can't be stopped—"

"You can be, and you will be!"

"Oh, no. Not me."

There was a great deal more, all in the same vein, and finally I got very annoyed. "I don't like this kind of talk and I wish you'd stop."

"Because at heart you're a cold little slave-driver."

"No, that's not it at all."

"And what *is* it?"

"Because you sound so weak."

He sulked a long time over that and then he said: "I *am* weak. You're weak—"

"I am *not!*"

"We're all weak, that's why we've got to organize, it's the only way to beat them!"

"All right, maybe I'm weak, I'm only a girl that came to the city a few months ago, and I'm nothing to brag about. *But I'd die rather than admit it!*"

"I admit it! I admit the truth! I—"

"You stop that kind of talk right now! The idea! A big, strong healthy galoot like you, only twenty-seven years old, admitting you're licked before you even start!"

I was very angry. It was completely dark by now, and I knew I could never get to the meeting, so didn't even say any more about it. I knew that he still wasn't talking about what was really on his mind, although he certainly felt very strongly about this labor business, but in some way I felt it was important and I wanted to have it out with him.

* * *

When I called him a big strong galoot, I yelled very loud, and then he seemed to realize that there might be neighbors, and subsided for a time. I went out in the kitchen to see what there might be to eat. The icebox was empty, but there was plenty of English biscuit and canned things, so I made some canapes and coffee and served them on a table in the living room, although I had to use condensed cream with the coffee. He gobbled it down, as I did, for we were very hungry. Then I took the dishes out, and he came and helped me wash them, and then we went back. I took his hand in mine. "What on earth is the matter with you anyway? Why don't you tell me what it's all about—what it's *really* all about?"

He gulped, and I saw he was about to cry, and I knew

he wouldn't want me to see him doing it. I snapped the lights out quick, and went to the door of the veranda. "Let's sit out here. It's such a pretty night."

It *was* a pretty night, with no moon but the stars shining bright and frogs croaking down near the water. We sat in a big canvas porch seat and I took his hand in mine again. "Go on. Tell me."

"What the hell? You want the story of my life?"

Now right there was where I should have said yes, I want the story of your life, it's most important that I know the story of your life. But at his words something like a knife shot through me. Because if he told the story of *his* life I might have to tell the story of *my* life, and I didn't want to have to say I had been an orphan, that I didn't know who I was, that I didn't even know my proper name. Perhaps you think this is far-fetched, but there are many of us in that situation in the world. We form a little club, and if you ever meet any of them they will tell you the same thing: it is a terrible thing not to know who you are, a secret shame that gnaws at you constantly, and all the more because you are helpless to do anything about it. So I merely said: "Not if you don't want to."

"I'm—just no good, that's all."

"Some people might not think so."

"Oh, yes, if they knew it all."

"Most of the time I think you're -a lot of good. And fine inside, I mean. But I don't like it when you talk this way. I don't mind what you are. I don't mind if you're never anything—of what you mean. But I hate it when you stop fighting. That's the main thing—to do your best."

"I'm blocked off from my best."

Again, what was he talking about? I didn't know, and for my own reasons, I was afraid to ask. So I merely patted his hand and said: "Nobody can be blocked off from their best, if they really try. It's got to come out."

He put his head on my shoulder, and we sat a long time without talking, and then he went to the end of the veranda and sat for awhile with his back to me, looking out over the water. Then he came and stood looking down on me. "There's one way I can get back at them"

"How?"

"By marrying you."

It was like a dash of cold water in the face somehow. Up to then, in spite of all the talk he had been indulging in, I had felt very near him, but now I felt very queer, and must have hesitated for a time before I said anything. "Is that the only reason you want to marry me? To get back at them?"

"Well—let's say to get clear of them."

"To show your independence?"

"All right, put it that way."

"It doesn't interest me to be the Spirit of '76 to your little revolution whatever it's about, as I haven't found out yet."

"What do you mean by that?"

"There's only one reason I'd marry you, or anybody. If you loved me, and I felt I loved you, that would be enough reason. But just to get back at them well, that may be your idea of a reason, but it's not mine."

"There's plenty I haven't told you."

"I doubt if I'd be interested."

I went in, put my wet bathing things back into the bag, put on my hat and went out He was sitting on the step. "Where are you going?"

"Well, there seems to be a town or something over there, so I thought I'd take the train back. I was supposed to be brought back long ago, but nothing seems to have been done about it."

He threw my bag into a corner, took off my hat and sat me down in the canvas porch seat. Then we started arguing again, and were right back where we started.

We argued and argued, and it was dreary and didn't make any sense, and he said of course he loved me, and I said he didn't say it the right way. Then he said his vacation started the next day, and we could have a two-weeks' honeymoon, and I said I didn't see what that had to do with it. Then the frogs stopped croaking as though somebody had given them a signal, and it was so still you almost held your breath and everything we had been talking about seemed unreal, and all that mattered was that he was there and I was there, and peace came down upon us. And after awhile I said: "How much do you make?"

" . . . Hundred bucks a week."

"All right, then, I make eighty-five. That's enough."

"Do you mean yes."

"I might as well. I really want to. Do you?"

"You know I do."

"Then yes."

Next thing I knew, the sun was shining and I was lying there under a blanket, and he was shaking me. "Breakfast's ready."

I got up and went inside. He was all shaved and fresh-looking, but my sports dress was wrinkled, and my eyes were red and my face shiny, and my hair all rough and ratty. I took a bath, gave the dress a quick press with an electric iron that was there, and made myself look as decent as I could. Then we had the toast and coffee he had made, and when we got in the car the dew was still on the grass. We were before the big Monday rush, and made good time. We parked near Brooklyn Bridge and went over to the City Hall and got married. We were the first couple. We got in the car again and started uptown. I looked at him and realized I had never yet called him Grant, and yet he was my husband.

Part II

KNIFE UNDER THE TONGUE

Five

We drove up to the Hutton, and I went up and packed and then came down and checked out, and paid with a check. He put my things in the car, and we drove over to his apartment, which was on East 54th Street. It was in a regular apartment building and had a large living room with a view clear over to Queens, and dining room and kitchen, and seemed a great deal more expensive than anybody could afford who made only a hundred dollars a week. But that wasn't what struck me about it. It was the strangest place I had ever been in, and yet I knew it was interesting and in very fine taste. Except for the furniture itself, which was comfortable and of good quality, everything in it, even the rugs, was Indian. There were Mexican serapes, all very beautiful, hanging on the walls, as well as pictures by Mexican artists, mainly, as I later found out, Rivera and Orozco, all of Indians. There were Navajo rugs scattered around, and Indian silver and gold work, and on the wall a framed collection of arrowheads, ranging in size from tiny little red ones, which had been used to shoot birds with, up to big spear heads, and all arranged beautifully, in order of size, in white cotton batting with a glass frame over them. Then off on a table, under glass, there was a collection of stone instruments, which I later found out

were what the Aztec priests had used to hack out the hearts of the sacrificial victims. However, there was something very beautiful about them, made as they were out of a black stone called obsidian, which was capable of being sharpened, as Grant once showed me, merely by holding it in water so that the oxidation or something brought it to a fine edge.

All this, however, I only partly saw, except to realize I was in a most unusual place, and also to realize that there was something back of all this wild talk of Grant's that I did not in the least understand. He had the boy take my things to the bedroom, and then began walking around much as he had the evening before. Suddenly it was dismal and hot, and sticky, and completely different from what a bride's first day is supposed to be. However, I merely said: "It must be getting on toward eleven, so I think I had better go to work."

He hardly seemed to hear me. "Ah—what was that?"

"I say it's time for me to go to work."

"Oh. I suppose so."

"Well—shall I come back here then?"

"Why—yes, of course."

"May I have a key?"

"Why—certainly. Here, take mine."

* * *

I usually went to work on the subway, but I felt so miserable I took a taxi, first taking care to note the number of the apartment house, which made me feel still worse, as it was really supposed to be my home, and yet I had to remember it as though it was the address of some stranger. I cried in the taxi all right, and I was still crying when we came in sight of the restaurant. Then I saw it was being picketed, with a lot of the girls out there carrying placards, and arguing with people that started to go in. So I knew the strike had come as a result of the

big meeting. But I was too sick at heart even to think about the union, or anything, and I told the driver to go on without stopping, and then I told him to turn around and take me back where he had picked me up.

* * *

He had to go down to the Battery to turn around, and then was when I heard newsboys screaming the name Harris and saw the big headlines. I bought a paper out of the cab window and there it was:

HARRIS JILTS DEB, WEDS WAITRESS

Underneath was a big picture of Grant, with the caption Heir to Railroad Millions, and a smaller picture of a girl named Muriel Van Hoogland, with a brief item in very big type saying their engagement was announced last June, the wedding to take place in September, but that when she flew in from California that morning, she found he had just two hours before married me. I began to see things a little more clearly, or thought I did. I looked to see if there was any more, but there wasn't except for a small item about the Karb strike. It had started, apparently, only a few minutes before I drove up there. The demands adopted at the big meeting had been presented to the management, which refused even to consider them at all, whereupon the girls had been called out on strike.

By now, I realized that except for the coffee at the shack, I hadn't had anything to eat, so instead of going at once to the apartment, I had the driver let me out at Times Square, and went in a restaurant for a sandwich. But while that was coming I went to the phone booth and called NBC and checked on the programs that had gone on ahead of Bergen on that station. And one of them was the young man who does interviews with

people boarding planes at Lockheed Airport, in Burbank, California.

* * *

When I came out on the streets again there were later editions, with longer items in them. One was an interview with Muriel Van Hoogland, in which she said she didn't care a bit, and then burst out crying and slammed the door in the reporters' faces. One was about me and my work at Karb's and in the headline of that occurred for the first time the nickname, Modern Cinderella, which stuck. So by now I was not only feeling miserable, but afraid and worried, and I wanted time to think. I didn't feel glad I had married a rich man. That part hardly entered my head, important though I hold money to be. I merely felt in some bitter way that I had been made a fool of, and when I ate my sandwich I walked up to the Newsreel Theatre and went in and sat down. There was nothing about me on the screen that day. I suppose it was too soon, though there was plenty later. I don't know how long I sat there, but finally it all seemed to focus that I had to have it out with Grant, and yet I even hated the idea of going back to the apartment. So after a long time I left the theatre, and it must have been three or four o'clock.

When I came out into the sunshine, I was startled to see my own picture in the papers, very big, with Grant's picture much smaller, and Muriel Van Hoogland's just a little circle down at one side. It was the picture I had had taken when I graduated from high school in Nyack, and that meant it must have come from there, and that frightened me. And sure enough, there was a whole long item about the orphan asylum, and being a waitress in the hotel, and all the rest of it that I had wanted to keep to myself.

But what made something turn over inside of me was the big headline at the top of the page:

CINDY EMBEZZLED, CHARGE

And the main story was all about how Clara Gruber said I had absconded with the union funds, and had sworn a warrant out for my arrest.

* * *

I went to a drug store and called the Solon, and told them I was quitting. I didn't take a cab over to the apartment. I didn't want to go that fast. I went clumping over on my two feet, and the nearer I got the slower I went. I went up in the elevator, let myself in, and Grant was in the bedroom making a phone call. It took several minutes, and seemed to be about somebody that was ill, whom I took to be Muriel Van Hoogland, but that was a mistake. I sat down and waited. He hung up, and came out and began marching around again, and seemed to be under a great strain. He went to the window and looked out. "It's hot."

"Quite."

"By the way, I was thinking of something else this morning when you went out and didn't realize what you meant. You don't have to bother about that job. There's no need for you to work."

"I didn't."

"You -oh. That's good. It's terribly hot."

"They're on strike."

"Who?"

"The girls. The slaves. Remember?"

"Oh. Oh, yes."

The bell rang, and he answered. It was a reporter who had come up without being announced. "Well I suppose you'd better come in."

I remembered what Muriel Van Hoogland had done, and thought that was a pretty good idea myself. I went and slammed the door in the reporter's face, then went back and took my seat again. "Now suppose you begin."

"About what?"

"About all of it."

"I don't quite know what you mean. If there's something on your mind suppose *you* begin."

"Who was that you were so concerned about just now?"

"My mother. This thing seems to have upset her."

"You mean your marriage?"

"Yes, of course."

"To a waitress?"

"—All right, to a waitress, but if I'm not complaining, I don't see that we have anything to discuss."

"I do, so we'll discuss. Who are you, anyway?"

"I told you my name. In case you've forgotten it, you'll find it on the marriage certificate. I believe you took it."

"You seem to be a little more than Grant Harris, Esquire. May I ask who the Harrises are why the newspapers, for example, give so much space to the marriage of a Harris to a waitress?"

"U. S. Grant Harris, my grandfather, was perhaps the worst scalawag in American history. He stole a couple of railroads, made a great deal of money $72,000,000, I believe was the exact figure—and died an empire builder, beloved and respected by all who knew him slightly—or at any rate by the society editors. He left two children—my father, Harwood Harris, who died when I was five years old, and my uncle, George Harris, head of Harris, Hunt and Harris, where I have the honor to be employed. My uncle carries on my grandfather's mighty work—he stole a railroad in Central America only last week, come to think of it. I could have told him the locomotive won't run, now that all the wood along the right of-way got burned off in a mountain fire a few months ago, but he didn't consult me, and—"

"Never mind the mountain fire. Whose house was that —where we spent the day yesterday?"

". . . My sister's, Mrs. Hunt's."

"Why did you say it belonged to a friend?"

"Well—of course, it really belongs to her husband. I hope I can call Hunt a friend."

"I'd call him a brother-in-law."

"I guess he is, but I never think of him that way."

"Why didn't you tell me all this sooner?"

"Well—you never asked me, and—"

"And, in addition to that, there was this little matter of—Miss Muriel Van Hoogland. Who is she?"

"Just a girl."

"Whom you had promised to marry?"

"That was all my uncle's doing. My uncle continues another pleasing custom of my grandfather's, by the way the negotiation of what he calls favorable alliances, meaning marrying his nephews off to girls who have money. It wouldn't have meant anything except that my mother let the wool be pulled over her eyes and before I knew it, mainly to make her happy, I had got myself into something pretty serious."

"And then Muriel went west?"

"Yes, that was in July"

"To buy her trousseau?"

"That I don't know."

"Oh, I think we can take it for granted, that to be worthy of a Harris, Muriel would buy her wedding clothes at Adrian's."

"What she did in California I don't know and I'd rather we took nothing for granted, if you don't mind."

"And then?"

"And then *you* came along."

"And then true love was so irresistible that you left Muriel stood-up at the airport and married me, is that it?"

"I guess that about covers it."

"Well I don't. You didn't say anything about love

when you asked me to marry you—not at first, and it hurt me, and I ought to have known that any other reason was an insult, and—"

"Is a marriage proposal an insult?"

"Oh, it can be, even from a Harris, if that one thing isn't there—"

"Don't you *know* how I feel about you?"

"Sometimes I know or think I do. But that wasn't why you asked me. It was all about the system and getting back at them, whoever 'they' are. Is that the only reason you wanted me, so you could get back at your uncle for trying to make you marry Muriel?"

"No!"

"Then *what* was it?"

"It would take me a week to explain it to you."

"I've got a week."

"They won't let me do what I want to. They—"

"And who is 'they'?"

"My uncle!"

"And your mother."

"We'll leave my mother out of this."

"Oh no, we won't."

"I tell you my mother has nothing to do with it. If everybody in the world were as fine as she is—the hell with it! I—I've got to go see how she is. She's my mother, can't you understand that? And she's sick. I've I've brought this on her. I—"

He started for the door but I was there first. "And I'm your wife, if you can understand that. And you've brought this on *me*. You're not going to your mother. I don't care how sick she is *if* she's sick, which I seriously doubt. You're staying here, and we're going into it. I told you I've got a week, I've got a lifetime. They won't let you do what you want to do, I think that's what you said. What is it you want to do?"

I still stood there by the door, and he began tramping up and down the room, his eyes set and his lips twitch-

ing. He kept that up a long time and then he dropped into a chair, let his head fall on his hands and ran his tongue around the inside of his lips before he spoke to stop their twitching. "Study Indians."

"You—what did you say?"

He leaped at me like a tiger, took me by the arms and shook me until I could feel my teeth rattling. "Laugh let me hear you laugh! I'll treat you like a wite! Just let me see a piece of a grin and I'll knock it down your throat so fast you won't have time to swallow it! Go on—why don't you laugh?"

"Is that why you have all these Indian things here?"

"Why do you think?"

"And you want to read books about them? I still don't quite understand it."

"What do I care whether you understand it or not, or anybody understands it? You don't study Indians out of books. You study them on the hoof. You go where they are, and—oh, God, what's the use?"

"You mean in—Oklahoma?"

"If you knew anything—or if you or *any* of them knew anything—you'd know that all the Indians aren't in Oklahoma. More than half the population of this hemisphere is Indian—millions and millions of them—they're the one surviving link with this country's past they're anthropologically more important than all the tribes of Asia put together and skip it I'm sorry. It would be impossible to make you understand it, or any of them understand it, and I apologize for even trying."

"You study them—and then what?"

"Write a book. That's all—just a book."

I sat down and then looked around the room at all the things he had in there and after awhile I got up and walked around looking at them one by one. There were little typewritten labels on most of them which I hadn't noticed before, telling exactly where they came from, what their use was and what their names were in Indian

languages and in English. Then I walked over to the big built-in bookcase that filled one side of the room and pulled out one or two books and looked through them. They were different from any books I had ever seen—most of them were bound in leather, some of them in parchment, and they were filled with all sorts of footnotes and scientific references. I knew then at least what he was talking about, the kind of books he wanted to write anyway, even if I had never read any books like that, or even knew there were such books But there was still more I had to find out. "Why won't they let you—study Indians?"

"Costs money."

"In what way?"

"All you have to have is an expedition, a flock of assistants, an army of porters and a boatload of equipment. It runs into money, big money. And I've *got* money -all the money it takes -or will have some day, when George Harris is no longer trustee. That's why I said I'd marry that Muriel idiot. I thought if I did that George might kick in, but when he got coy about it I knew that was just a dream."

"You didn't make the money."

"Neither did George Harris. Neither did my grandfather. He stole it -and a lot I care. But isn't it better to have it put to some decent use? Am I supposed to jump up and cheer when George Harris uses it to win a race with one of his yachts? All right, you want to know why I hate the system -any system's wrong that lets useful wealth be wasted so George Harris can sail yachts – the Alamo, the Alamo II, the Alamo III, and the Alamo IV—aren't they a lovely end product for a civilization? For them men sweat and walk tracks in blizzards and tap flanges and get killed in wrecks, and for them I have to give up something that's worth doing."

"And to break that system you tried to organize a junior executives' union?"

"Anyhow, I tried to do *something*! All right, George made me a junior executive. The day after I got out of Harvard he had a job waiting for me a swell job where I can learn the business from the ground up, so one day I can acquire a knowledge of stealing, so I know how it's done. I beat that rap by going in the Army. But Okinawa didn't last forever and pretty soon here we were again, and this time I told him O.K. And so I don't disgrace him when I board his yacht he gives me an allowance of $200 a week. And so I get thoroughly integrated, as he calls it, he tells me to marry Muriel. Well, you're right. Going after George by organizing an office-workers' union is like hunting an elephant with a cap pistol. But a kid with a cap pistol is fire arm conscious, at least. I'll get him. I'll get him yet."

"I see. Marrying a waitress was merely exchanging a cap pistol for a pea shooter. They're not much good against elephants either."

"Listen, I've got you, and you're my first step in cutting loose from George, his yachts and everything he stands for."

I felt sick and queer and frightened. We sat there for a time in the half dark, for it was now well after six, and then it was my turn to begin walking around. I kept passing the bookcase, and little by little it crept in on me that this man was my husband and that, in spite of my pride, I had to help him fight through somehow, even if I didn't quite understand what it was about or believe in it at all, for that matter. I went over, sat down in his lap and pulled his head against me. "Grant."

He put his arm around me and drew me close to him. "You never called me that before."

"Do you want me to?"

"Yes."

"I think the Indians are swell."

"I think you mean you like me."

"I more than like you, or will, if you'll let me. But

that isn't what I meant, and that isn't what you want me to mean. I don't know much about Indians, or this book—"

"It'll be a hell of a book."

"That's it—tell me about it."

"It'll take me ten years to write it but it'll really be a history of this country that everybody else has missed. Listen, Carrie, they've all written that story from the deck of Columbus' ship *I'm* going to write it from San Salvador Island, beginning with the Indian that peeped out through the trees and saw that anchor splash down. It was a bright moonlight night all over the American continent the night before Columbus slipped into that harbor did you know that, Carrie? I'm going to tell what that moon shone on—are you listening?"

"Go on. I love it."

Six

I lay in his arms until it was quite dark and he told me more about his book and how it was not to be an ordinary history at all but a study of Indians and the imprint they have left on our civilization Then for a few minutes he had nothing to say and then he stirred a little. "What's the matter?"

"I've been thinking, Carrie, just as a sort of peace offering, hadn't I better send some flowers around to my mother?"

"I think that will be fine–as soon as she sends flowers to *me*."

"She sends flowers to—?"

"I'm the bride, after all."

"Oh–that's a different department. What she sends you, that couldn't be just a bunch of flowers, you know, bought at the drop of a hat. But tonight—she's not herself and it will make a difference."

"Can't you order them by phone?"

"I'll have to put a card in. I'll only be a few minutes, and then we'll pick out a nice place to have dinner."

He got his hat and went out, and I was left with this same feeling I had had before, of being sick and forlorn and up against something I didn't understand, and mixed in with it was a sense of helplessness, for I was sure that it wasn't the system, or his Uncle George, or the yachts that was the cause of his trouble, but this same woman he refused to talk about and yet seemed to have on his mind all the time, his mother. And what could I do about her?

The place seemed horribly gloomy then, and I wanted light. I groped all around but couldn't find any of the switches. I began to cry. Then the house phone rang and I went to answer it and couldn't find *that*. Then the phone stopped ringing and in a minute the buzzer sounded. I knew how I had come in, at any rate, so I opened the door. A policeman was standing there. "Carrie Selden Harris?"

"I'm Carrie Harris."

It was the first time I had used my new name and it felt strange, but I tried not to show it to him.

"Warrant for your arrest. I warn you that anything you say in my presence may be used against you—come on."

I asked him to wait, then went to change from my sport outfit, which I still had on, into a dress that seemed more suitable to be arrested in, and then, fumbling around in the dark, I *really* broke down and wept. Why couldn't Grant be there instead of traipsing out to a florist's to send flowers to a woman who hadn't even had the decency to wish him well when he got married?

I don't think I could have got dressed at all if the policeman hadn't found a switch and turned it on so that a little light filtered into the bedroom.

I put on my green dress, a green hat and powdered my nose some kind of way and went into the living room. The policeman was a big man, rather young, and looked at me, I thought, in a kind way. "You got any calling to do about bail, something like that, be a good idea to do it from here. Station house phone, sometimes they got a waiting line on it and anyhow you're only allowed one call. Besides, it's pretty high on the wall for you to be talking into."

"Thank you, there's nobody I want to call."

"You got a husband?"

"There's nobody I want to call."

I wouldn't have called Pierre's or waited for Grant to get back if they were going to send me to the electric chair.

* * *

I had never been in a police station before but I didn't stay there long enough to find out much about it. We rode around in the police car, the officer and I, and it was a battered-looking place with a sergeant behind a big desk, and sure enough, five or six people waiting to use the telephone, which was so high against the wall that everybody had to stand on tiptoe and yell into it. The sergeant was a fat man who told me I was under arrest on a complaint sworn out by Clara Gruber for embezzlement of union funds, and that if I gave him the required information about myself quickly he might be able to get my case disposed of before the magistrate went home to dinner and at least I would know the amount of bail.

But just as I had finished giving him my name, age and residence, Mr. Holden came striding in and that was the end of it. He said something quickly to the sergeant and

then I saw Clara Gruber standing outside the door looking pretty uncomfortable. He beckoned to her and then he, she and the sergeant went into a room where there seemed to be some kind of court in session. When they came out he took my arm and patted it. "It's all over—Clara made a little mistake."

"The money is still in the bank, every cent of it."

"Don't I know it? Come on the girls are waiting to give you a cheer."

What became of Clara Gruber I don't know, because before I knew it I was in a taxi with him and in a few minutes we were at Reliance Hall. Hundreds of girls were up there holding a big meeting and when he brought me in they all started to yell and applaud and newspaper photographers began clicking flashlights in my eyes and when I got up on the platform the cheering broke out into one long scream. Next thing Mr. Holden was banging for order and a girl was on her feet nominating me for president. That was when I got into it. I made them a little speech, saying that I still regarded myself as one of the them and wanted to keep on being treasurer but that I couldn't be president because I had just got married and might not have the time to give to the duties. However, I never really finished about why I didn't want to be president. As soon as I mentioned my marriage they all broke out again into yells and I realized that why they were cheering for me had nothing to do with the money at all but was really on account of my marrying Grant. I felt warm and friendly and a little weepy, because it meant something after the day I had had to know I had friends, but at the same time I wanted to get out of there, because what they had in mind was a successful Cinderella and I didn't feel that way about it at all and even hated the very idea. Besides, no matter how angry I had been at Grant, I had to get back to him.

Mr. Holden must have guessed what I was thinking, because he banged for order again and made them a

little speech saying I had to leave and for them to continue with the reelection of a new president and he would be back. So next day, I found out, they elected a girl by the name of Shirley Silverstein from the Brooklyn restaurant.

* * *

When we got to the street we didn't take a taxi, we went to a little coffee pot around the corner and I ordered bacon and eggs, and Mr. Holden had a cup of coffee. His whole manner changed as soon as we had done our ordering, and he sat there studying me until finally a bitter little smile came over his face. "Well—how does it feel to be rich, envied and socially prominent?"

I could see he was horribly disappointed in me for having, as he thought, engaged in a cold-blooded piece of gold-digging, and I had to exercise control to keep from laughing in wild shrieks. However, I merely said: "Please I didn't know anything about that until I read the papers."

"I think you're lying."

"I'm not lying."

He lit a cigarette and studied me for a time, then took my hand again. "How's it going?"

"Terribly."

"I wanted you myself."

"Then why didn't you ask me?"

"I made up my mind long ago I would never ask any woman unless I knew she wanted me to a great deal."

"I thought you meant something else."

"I did. If you didn't want me enough for that I wouldn't want you enough for this."

I felt somehow guilty, as though I ought not to be talking of such things with him at all, so I said nothing. After a moment he went on: "Did you?"

"Why?"

"Because if you did—and do—that other way is still open and this one will be—I mean a wedding, a ring and all the rest of it—as soon as you can get an annulment and forget what you did today. Here we are—if you want me you simply don't go back to him at all."

I thought a long time over that and then I said: "I married the man I wanted."

"You can't get away with it. You aren't of his class—"

"If I hear any more about his class I'll—I'll scream! I'll stand right up here and scream."

"You can scream from now until doomsday and you'll not scream down his class—his class can't be destroyed by screaming. I didn't say he was better than you are—he and a million like him are not worth one girl like you and for all of them together I wouldn't give the powder it would take to blow them to hell. But he is of one class and you are of another. They have never mixed—from the time of Cromwell, from the time of Danton, from the time of Lenin, they have made war, the one upon the other. The trouble with you is, that you're American and you have this stupid illusion of equality. If you came from Europe, as I do, you'd know you're attempting something that can never come to pass, even when a whole caravan of camels march through the eye of a needle. Carrie, you're doomed. Give this foolish thing up, come with me tonight and we'll start out together, two people of a similar kind with some chance of success."

My eggs came then and I ate them, weighing every word he had said. When I was through I replied: "I married the man I want."

* * *

When I got home Grant was sitting in a big chair reading a book, but I could tell from the quick way he

was breathing that he had just grabbed the book when he heard my key in the lock. He looked up, then looked back to the book. "Oh, hello, Carrie."

"Hello."

"Been out for a walk? It *is* a beautiful night."

"No—just been getting arrested."

He looked up and stared at me, trying to make up his mind if I was kidding. ". . . For what?"

"Embezzlement."

He put up his book then and came over to me and I told him briefly what happened, omitting, however, anything about my talk with Mr. Holden. But I was casual about it and when I got through he couldn't seem to think of anything to say. After a few moments he turned away and remarked: "Well we haven't had that dinner yet."

I went out to the pantry, looked in the icebox and came back. "If you can wait a few minutes you can have exactly what I had."

"Oh—you've eaten?"

"Yes—since you seemed to be more concerned about your mother than about me I thought it advisable to have a little something. I had bacon and eggs. Just have a seat in the breakfast room and yours'll be ready in a little while."

I made him bacon, eggs, buttered bread and coffee, and served them to him there in the dining room. He ate the first two eggs I made him but still looked hungry, so I gave him three more and some extra bacon and poured a glass of milk for him. During all this I don't think three words were spoken, but when he had finished he appeared to be in a more amiable humor. But when I was about through washing the dishes the phone rang and he went in the bedroom to answer it. He came back as I was hanging up the dish towel and his face was white. "Carrie mother's just been taken to the hospital. I'll have to go over there."

He dashed out of the kitchen and I heard him go in the bedroom. I went in there. He was taking off the smoking jacket he had on when I came home and changing into his street coat. I closed the door and put my back against it. "Where did you say you were going?"

"To mother—they've just taken her over to Polyclinic."

"Very well then I'm going over to the Wakefield Hotel, where a gentleman has just invited me to live with him."

"What?"

"Grant, perhaps you've forgotten. This is our wedding night. You stay with me or I leave."

I opened the door and stepped away from it. "Take your choice. It's her or me."

He stood staring, his face working as though the door were some frightful object. Then he closed it, turned around and stared at me as though *I* were some frightful object. Then he broke into sobs, fell on the bed and buried his face in the pillow. I turned away, as it made me sick to look at him. Then I snapped the switch and turned out the light.

The next day was one long nightmare of reporters, phone calls, photographers and more reporters. The desk kept sending up stacks of papers as soon as they would come out, and it appeared that his family had now decided to talk and that his uncle, sisters and various relatives all agreed that whom he married was up to Grant. They also agreed, apparently, that while it was his own affair, he had disgraced them pretty thoroughly.

In addition to the interviews there was an item about his mother's being in Polyclinic. After breakfast he went over to see her and to this I made no objection. When he came back I tried to find out what had passed between them, but he was extremely evasive. He pretended to tell me everything, said his mother had assured him that if he loved me there was only one thing for him to do and he had done it and she would have been dis-

tressed if he had done anything else. Later I realized that this was probably true. But it was only half true, and Grant, although he tried to conceal it from me, was in more of a turmoil inside, if that was possible, than he had been before. As to the peculiar ways in which she was able to torture him while saying the sweetest things, I cannot explain in a few words, so you will have to let me make this clear when I come to it.

* * *

About four-thirty the house phone rang, and I answered. "Mrs. Bernard Hunt and two other ladies in the lobby, calling on Mr. Harris."

"Will you tell them that Mr. Harris is indisposed at the moment and ask them if they would care to see Mrs. Harris?"

"Just a moment, Mrs. Harris."

By that time Grant had come into the foyer of the apartment where the house phone was, looking very puzzled. "There's nothing the matter with me. Who is it?"

"I think it's your sisters. I'm just giving them a little lesson in manners. Funny, considering their position in society they wouldn't know about such things themselves."

The desk was on the line again, then: "Mrs. Harris?"

"Yes?"

"They'll be right up."

He didn't make any sense out of it, but I pushed him into the bedroom and told him to wait five minutes before he came out. The buzzer sounded then. I counted three slowly and in between kept saying to myself: "Don't talk about the weather! Don't talk about the weather! —*Don't talk about* the weather!" Then I opened the door. The three of them were standing there and at once I had a chilly feeling because written all over them, with

a big S, was Society. That is, with the exception of the one that turned out to be Mrs. Hunt, who had at least something else besides that. She was not as tall as the other two, who looked like blobby imitations of Grant, and she was a little better-looking and had more shape and zip. I found out later she slightly resembled her mother, and while she was the snootiest of the three, she did seem to have some little spark of humanness, or humor, or whatever you would call it. I tried not to overdo it. I merely looked pleasant, glanced from one to the other, and said: "Mrs. Hunt?"

"I am Mrs. Hunt."

"I'm the new Mrs. Harris, and I think you must be Grant's sister. I've heard him speak of you a number of times."

I held out my hand and she took it, and then introduced the other two, whose names were Elsie and Jane, but I was careful to address them as "Miss Harris." Mrs. Hunt's name turned out to be Ruth, but again I called her Mrs. Hunt. By that time I had got them into the living room and all four of us had said we were so glad to meet each other, which certainly was not true on my part and I don't think it was true on theirs, but I had tried to get them into a position where there was nothing else they could say. I asked them to sit down but at once Mrs. Hunt turned to me and burst out: "But how is poor Grant? My dear, don't tell me it's made him—*really* ill?"

"Oh, he's all right. I'll tell him you're here. I only said he was indisposed so you'd have to call on me instead of him."

That one landed between her eyes just where I aimed it. She blinked, then laid her hand on my arm. "My dear—of course, of *course!* But the papers said something about your being employed, and it didn't occur to me you'd be home."

That one landed between *my* eyes, and I half admired the fast way in which she had come back at me. But I

laughed very gaily and said: "Oh, I'm employed, but we're on strike."

"Oh, how *thrilling!*"

It come like a chorus from all three of them and on that we sat down. I had an awful second when I didn't know what I was going to talk about next, but my eye happened to catch the arrowheads and I began to gabble as fast as I could about the strange Indian collection I had come to live with, and this had a most unexpected result. They all chimed in about how stupid the Indian idea was and how I had to cure Grant of it, and this was not at all what I thought, but I thought it advisable to say it was all so unfamiliar to me I didn't know how I felt about it, and about that time Grant came in.

They all jumped up and I think they had expected to throw their arms around him and offer condolences for the terrible thing that had happened in his life, but as he looked just as big and healthy as ever and merely said hello, without any particular fuss, they sat down again and it was a little flat. So I thought perhaps as I had put them in their places a little, at least to my own satisfaction. I had better set out a little hospitality. I got up and asked: "May I give you some tea?"

"Oh no, my dear, don't even think of it. We'll have to be going in a few minutes anyway. We just stopped by to—"

"—Call on the bride—"

"*Certainly!* But don't even *consider* going to any trouble about us."

That was Mrs. Hunt, and the other two chorused along with her. Grant got up and went out. I did some more babbling about the Indians and in a few minutes he was back, carrying a tray with a bottle of Scotch on it, a seltzer siphon, some glasses and a bowl of ice. "Tea is a little out of date, Carrie. I think we'll offer them something more modern."

I got up, took the bottle of Scotch and, as gracefully as I

could, pitched it out the window. It seemed the longest time before it broke in the court beside the apartment house. When I heard it crash I turned to him. "That's for correcting my manners. *I* am offering them *tea.*"

There was a long and extremely dismal silence. Then Mrs. Hunt wriggled in her chair a little. "I guess we take tea."

"I guess you do."

I went out and fixed tea and canapes, which turned out very well, considering what was there to make them with, for I had had no chance to go out and do any marketing at all. Then on the tray I put a bottle of rye and a bottle of brandy and went back in the living room. "Now we have tea, rye and brandy. Which can I give you?"

Mrs. Hunt smiled sourly. "Tea, darling."

But the taller one, Elsie, jumped and and said: "Oh, the hell with it! We've got to say it, so why keep this up? Give me a slug of rye, will you, dear sister-in-law, so I can really fight? Make it double, it'll save time."

The other one, Jane, closed in on the liquor tray and grabbed the bottle. "Two."

"Three," said Mrs. Hunt.

Grant got up. "Oh, hell—let's all have a slug of rye."

So we all began to laugh and they got up and grabbed canapes without waiting for me to pass them, began wolfing them down and grunting that they were pretty good. Then we all had a slug of rye, including myself, a most inadvisable step on my part, as I found out afterwards, for while my restaurant work had made me very expert at serving liquor, I hadn't much experience drinking it. But it all seemed so comical at the time, us hating each other the way we did and at the same time sociably having a drink so we could fight, that I wanted to be a good sport, and so gagged mine down too. Then we all sat down and Grant hooked one knee over his chair and growled: "Well, get at it."

Mrs. Hunt got at it without any further encourage-

ment. She jumped up, charged over to Grant and shook her finger right under his nose. "You big slob! What do you mean by doing a thing like this? Haven't you any regard for us? Haven't you any regard for *her*? Don't you know you've ruined her life?"

That was where I jumped up, for the liquor was reacting on me in a most unexpected way and leading me to do something I practically never do, which is lose my temper. "Who asked you to take up for me? You can confine yourself to your own ruined life or you'll get something that will be a big surprise! I may look small, but I'm perfectly able to throw all three of you down every flight of stairs in this apartment house, and if there's any more of that kind of talk out of you I'll do it."

"Where did you get all that muscle—carrying trays?"

"Yes! And milking cows on my stepfather's farm, and a whole lot of other things you never did."

"Set 'em up in the next alley," said Grant. "Let's all have another drink."

So we all had another drink, and this time when Mrs. Hunt started in, it was on me. "Oh, you needn't be so tough. We've all got to arbitrate, you know."

I wanted to yell at her some more, but all of a sudden it seemed to be too much trouble, and also my tongue felt woolly and thick, so all I said was: "Whass arbitrate?"

"Now we're gett'n somewhere," said Jane, and her tongue seemed to be thick too.

"Arbitrate," said Mrs. Hunt in a very waspish way, "means that for the sake of appearances you have to take us to your bosom and pretend to like us, and we have to take you to our bosoms and pretend we like you, although we don't at all. We'd like that distinctly understood. We think you're terrible."

"Oh, thass all right. I think you're terrible too."

So then everything became extremely cloudy in my mind and yet wholly delightful in a way, because I said the most awful things to them, and they said the most

awful things to me, and then we would have another drink and laugh very loudly and start all over again. So then there was a great deal of talk about a cocktail party which Mrs. Hunt would give for me within three or four days because, as she said, a cocktail party practically required no manners at all and I would disgrace them less in that way than at any other form of entertainment she could think of. So I said I thought that was swell and a great deal better than a dinner party would be, because at a dinner party I might get up and begin to serve just from force of habit, and if I ever got hold of a plate of soup I might let her have it in the face. So then Grant said, "Set 'em up in the next alley," which seemed to be about the only remark he could make all afternoon, and Mrs. Hunt said she would give anything to be able to throw soup with such accuracy, and I said it was really no trick at all, that all it needed was something inspirational to aim at. So then Elsie said: "The rye's all gone. Never mind about the soup, redhead, get the cork out of the brandy."

So next thing I knew I was in the bedroom lying down, very sick, and Grant was sitting beside me and they were gone. And next thing I knew, it was very late at night and I was alone there, with my head very clear and a guilty feeling all over me. I got up and went into the living room. Grant was there reading. I went and sat down in his lap and he put his arm around me and ran his fingers through my hair. "How do you feel, Carrie?"

"All right. What happened?"

"Oh—my sisters came and you and I and they had a good Kilkenny fight that cleared the air quite a little."

"What was that about—a cocktail party?"

"Ruth's giving you one. Friday, I believe."

"I don't want to go to her cocktail party."

"I was a little leery of it, but you seemed set on it, so I kept my notions to myself."

"Then I said I'd go?"

"'In Karb's uniform,' were your exact words, 'with a napkin on one arm and a pewter tray under the other.'"

"Tell me something, Grant. Was I drunk?"

"Stinko. And very sweet."

"I've heard about that all my life, being drunk, and here it had to happen to me today, of all times."

"It's all right. I got you to bed."

"Then I'll have to go? To the cocktail party?"

"I'm afraid you're hooked."

Seven

If I had no very clear recollection about accepting the invitation to the cocktail party the newspapers quickly refreshed my memory. The first of the next day's editions had nothing about it but around the middle of the afternoon some of the people Mrs. Hunt called up must have tipped the reporters off, because when Grant's financial editions came up, there I was again, plastered all over the front pages, with stories of how the family had decided to accept me "on probation," as one paper put it. I had hardly started to read them when the phone rang and it was Mrs. Hunt. She accused me of calling up the papers and giving them the information, and I promptly accused her of the same, so that was how we discovered that it must have been one of the guests who had done it.

Grant was not at home at the time. He was supposed to be on vacation but had gone down to his office in connection with some matter he had to attend to. It threw me into a highly nervous state again and I wanted to call Mrs. Hunt back and tell her I wanted nothing to do with the cocktail party, or her, or any of them, for that matter, but I kept reminding myself that I had to think of Grant and

make an earnest effort to adjust myself to a situation that he couldn't very well help. I wanted a chance to think, and as the phone had started ringing again, with reporters asking all sorts of stupid questions, I put on my hat and went out.

I didn't pay any attention to where I was going but next thing I knew I was at Sutton Place. It reminded me of the night Grant and I walked over there and it had all been so simple and gay, so I turned on my heel and started west, toward Broadway. I got as far as Seventh Avenue and turned south toward Times Square. Pretty soon that brought me to the Newsreel Theatre. That seemed to be about the only place I could have any peace in those days, so I bought a ticket and went in.

I was paying very little attention, and had about come to the conclusion that I was going to follow my instincts and not go to the cocktail party, when to my complete astonishment I saw my name appear on the screen with a flash announcement that patrons of the Newsreel Theatre would now get their first glimpse of the Modern Cinderella who had married herself to a million. Then there were shots of the Karb girls on strike and the announcer was rapidly explaining, in a manner very complimentary to me, that while I was now one of the socially elect of New York, I had not renounced my connection with the girls who had followed my leadership in union matters. Then the scene changed to Reliance Hall, with all the girls cheering and me going up on the platform with Mr. Holden, and I certainly had no idea at that time that among the cameras clicking at me was one making moving pictures. Then it changed again to a close shot of me making my little speech to the meeting, and I was surprised how young and unworldly I looked. But at least the green dress was nicely pressed and my hat was on straight and my face was decently powdered, and I thanked my stars I had taken the time to make myself look presentable before going out with the police officer.

When I came to the point where I mentioned my marriage it broke off and there were a lot of quick shots of the girls cheering, and then single shots of a number of girls, one after the other, with the various expressions on their faces, and I did wish they hadn't betrayed so clearly what was in their minds, which was that they wished they had married a rich man too. Then there was a quick shot of Mr Holden telling them I had to leave, and then here we came, he and I, down past the cameras, he with his arm around me, guiding me through the mob of girls who were trying to take me in their arms or shake hands with me or kiss me. Then it went into some automobile factory stuff, and I got up quickly and went out. The newsboys were still calling my name and I had a feeling there was no place I could go where I would have any peace and once again I was panicky and frightened.

When I got home Grant still hadn't come, so I sat down and waited and when he came in, around six thirty, he was cold and formal and different from what he had ever been before. He went in the bedroom and after a few minutes I went in there and asked him if he didn't think we had better go out to dinner, and he said he supposed so, and then for a few minutes he stood tying and retying his necktie and nothing was said. Then he turned on me quite savagely. "You said something, I believe, about some man who had invited you to come and live with him."

"Oh, yes. So I did."

"Who is he?"

"Oh, you met him, I believe. A labor leader."

"Yes, I met him. You and he seem to have been pretty intimate—even after you married me."

"I don't know of any intimacies."

"Why didn't you tell me you went to a union meeting with him?"

"That was in the papers."

"Not all of it. You better go up to the Newsreel Theatre and have a look at yourself."

"Oh, you saw that?"

"I saw it three times—especially the end of it, where he had his arm around you and was patting your hand. And you—you didn't have any objection, did you? Oh, no -you looked up at him every time he did it and—*where did you go with him then?*"

He had his fist doubled up and his eyes were glaring in a most frightening way, but something was singing inside of me and I didn't care whether he hit me or not. So I switched my hips as impudently as I could and said: "I went to dinner."

He took me by the shoulders and shook me and then our lips met and everything went swimming around and we lost all track of time until it was quite late. Then we were very near to each other and in love and I told him I had just acted that way because I liked to see him jealous. Then we went to dinner and I knew then that I wouldn't be able to tell him I had decided not to go to the cocktail party.

* * *

I made all preparations for this horrible event as carefully as I could and yet I became more and more nervous as Friday approached. I went to Miss Eubanks, the sales lady who had been so helpful to me before, and let myself be guided by her advice. She suggested two outfits, one in case the summer weather held, and another in case it should turn cold or rainy or both. This I thought a good idea, and for the first I picked out a chartreuse green. It was very expensive, but Miss Eubanks insisted that my costume should be very simple and reminded me that simplicity is only to be found in well-made clothes. This I knew to be true, so I took it, and she went with me to the hat department and I picked out a very lovely hat to go with it. It was another shade of green, and then we bought bronze shoes. She kept cautioning me not to get anything that looked like an ensemble.

"You want to be dressed—not dressed up." For the other outfit she suggested a suit and I picked out a steel blue which went very well with my hair, brown suede hat and brown shoes. She hesitated about letting me wear a suit that was ready-made, but finally concluded that with my figure, since it was very well tailored, it would be all right. Then she had me buy proper handbags, stockings and all accessories, and I paid with my personal check. It made quite a dent in my savings, but for some reason I wanted to appear in *my* things and not things that Grant had bought me. And that was why I went for them alone too, as I didn't want to feel or have him or *anybody* feel that I had needed any coaching from him.

Friday was a beautiful day, with just a touch of fall in the air, and he was so delighted with the way I looked in the chartreuse dress that I was almost glad I was going, and yet a nervous feeling kept spreading from the pit of my stomach until, as four-thirty approached, I wasn't sure whether I would be able to go through with it or not. About a quarter after four he suddenly said: "Let's walk, it's not far."

"Oh, yes—let's." Because I thought I would die if I had to sit and watch the El posts go by in a taxi.

"Then let's start now."

"I'm ready."

So we walked, and it did take a little of the nervousness out of me. We went over and turned up Park Avenue. Grant had got a hair-cut in the morning, quite unusual for him, and had on a dark brown suit and a new fall hat and carried a stick. I knew I looked very well, and for a few minutes I was very proud to be swinging along with him up Park Avenue, with people turning to look and a sense of being somebody.

The house was on Sixty-first Street between Park and Madison, and it was a whole house, not just an apartment. We were let in by a house man who spoke to Grant and bowed to me. We then went upstairs to a large living

room and Mrs. Hunt came in and we sat around talking as though we had never called each other names. We were ahead of the crowd, as she had asked us to be, and it was all very quiet and casual. Then Elsie and Jane arrived and joined in the discussion and you would hardly have known they were giving any party at all. I really didn't like Mrs. Hunt, or any of them, but I caught the point and remembered it: Never make a fuss about your hospitality, as so many people I had known were so prone to do. Then Mr. Hunt came in. He had just left his office and disappeared for a little while to dress, but he stopped long enough to shake hands with me and I caught him eyeing me sharply and, I thought, in a not unfriendly way. He was considerably older than Mrs. Hunt, who was younger than Grant, as were the other two girls, but even so he couldn't have been more than thirty five, and was tall and rather good looking. When he came down again he had on a short black coat and gray trousers, and I had a sudden reminder that, in spite of the pleasant casualness of the preliminaries, what I had to go through with would be, for me at any rate, very formidable indeed.

Then the guests began to arrive and they were being introduced to me very rapidly and I must say Mrs. Hunt was very graceful and considerate about it and made it seem that everything was in my honor and I almost felt I was welcome. So in a few minutes I was faced with what worried me most of all, which was what to talk about. Once more I had drilled it into myself: "*Don't talk about the weather.*" But what else did I know to talk about? This had given me several bad nights, for I try to be honest with myself, and after a great deal of restless tossing around I had come to the realization that I didn't *know* anything to talk about. I had never read any books or heard any music or seen any pictures or done any traveling. Of what is called culture I had none whatever. My world had been limited to my work, my savings and

the few people I had come in contact with, and that was all I ever talked about with other girls of my kind from morning until night. But certainly I couldn't begin complaining about the slowness of Karb's counterman to these people, or criticize the way the cooks neglected to break the soft boiled eggs, so the waitress had to do it. For Grant's sake I had to give some kind of account of myself, and I stood there shaking hands, badly frightened as to what it was going to be, when suddenly an idea hit me.

I began telling them about the strike. Luck was with me, for all of them became excited and wanted to hear about it, and so the ice was broken in two ways. I had found something that interested them and that I knew enough about not to make a fool of myself in discussing it, and also it relieved them of any embarrassment they may have felt about mentioning my occupation, and I breathed much easier. When another houseman came with a tray of cocktails I took one and sipped it a little so I could laugh and seem to be having a good time, but I was careful of the amount I drank, for I didn't want any repetition of what had happened before. One thing helped me a great deal. In my work as a waitress I had trained myself to remember people's names and use them in speaking to them, as that is the way to get regular customers. So it was no trouble for me to keep all the names straight, even after fifty or sixty people had arrived, and this greatly astonished Mrs. Hunt. I thought it advisable not to tell her how I became so name conscious, but I could see that she was favorably impressed and also was breathing much easier.

* * *

This went on for about an hour and I managed fairly well, for when the strike ran thin one of them would usually say something which permitted me to let *them*

take the lead and I fell back on something which has stood me in good stead before, especially with talkative customers. I professed to be greatly interested, which in a way I was, as I find many things interesting, and asked a lot of eager questions, so that they would do the talking for a little while.

I must have been acquitting myself quite creditably, because Mr Hunt drifted by one time, leaned close to me and mumbled in my ear. "You're doing fine."

I had got separated from Grant, as I wanted to be, since I shouldn't appear a clinging vine that he had to look out for, and of course Mrs. Hunt was too busy to be paying much attention to me anymore. Then two or three women who were talking to me suddenly stopped what they were saying and glanced over my shoulder toward the entrance from the outer hall. I became aware that a strained hush had fallen over the room. I turned around and there, standing with Mrs Hunt, was one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. She didn't appear to be over thirty-eight, she was even smaller than I am, with a lovely figure and beautiful high color in her cheeks that you could tell at once was natural. Her hair was blonde but shot slightly with gold so it was very brilliant. Her eyes were a peculiarly vivid green which I could see even from where I was. She had on the simplest summer dress, black with a design in it, and yet with her figure you could hardly take your eyes off it. She seemed to radiate charm and friendliness, and I was still staring at her when Mrs. Hunt came over to me. Her face was drawn and nervous and she didn't quite look me in the eye when she spoke. "Don't say I did this to you. She wasn't even invited. So come on. But I can tell you this much. The worst you can possibly imagine can't be as bad as it's really going to be."

"Who is it?"

"Mother."

It seemed impossible that one so young could be

Grant's mother, but I later found out she had been married at seventeen and that Grant came along as soon as the law allowed. But in spite of my surprise a chill began to creep up my backbone. I took a deep breath and we crossed the room.

Eight

We had no sooner done so than I discovered that the warm friendliness was all on the outside, with none on the inside whatever. She had shaken hands with some woman and stood there talking about a Commander in the Navy and the funny way he used to kick the goals when he was a midshipman at Annapolis, keeping Mrs. Hunt and me waiting and never looking at us at all. Even the woman was getting uncomfortable and Mrs. Hunt was growing more irritated by the second. Suddenly she cut in sharply:

"Mother! . . . If you can interrupt that fascinating discourse on the drop kicks long enough—"

"Place kicks, dear. Not drop kicks."

"They'll be just plain shin kicks if I hear any more about them I'd like to present Granny's new bride, the young Mrs. Harris."

Mrs. Harris looked at me then and her eyes seemed to shrink into two pieces of hard green glass. She opened her arms, drew me to her and spoke in a voice that fairly throbbed with emotion: "Darling! Oh, I've been looking forward *so* much to meeting you! Every day I made up my mind to pay you a visit but I've been so ill really, you have no idea. Will you overlook it can you bring yourself to forgive me?"

She didn't look ill and I didn't believe she cared whether I forgave her or not, but I thought if she was going to be hypocritical I might as well too, so I made my voice sound as gushy as I could and said: "And I too, Mrs. Harris! I so wanted to call at the hospital the moment I heard you were there but I wasn't sure you would like it, because so few of us look well in hospitals, do we?"

This dirty crack seemed to surprise her greatly but nothing like as much as it surprised me, so we stood grinning at each other, our arms intertwined, and for a moment neither of us had any more to say. Then a servant came up with a tray of cocktails and she stood there at her favorite trick of making everybody wait. This time it was while she decided what kind of cocktail she wanted. There were Martinis, Manhattans and side-cars on the tray, but of course, after changing her mind for five minutes she had to have an old fashioned and, just to make it good and complicated, it had to be an old fashioned made with Scotch. I wanted to get away from her, so, having been audacious about my occupation once with some success, I thought I would try it again and appear to be exceedingly nice to her while at the same time removing myself from where she was. I said: "Oh, Mrs. Harris, do let me make you one. I know exactly how you want it and I'm an expert at old fashioneds with Scotch —I used to make so many when I was a waitress at the Solon Cocktail Bar."

Her eyes opened wide, as though this was the most heavenly idea she had ever heard in her life. "Oh, darling *would* you?" Then she looked around at everybody and exclaimed: "Isn't that marvelous? Think of being an expert!" And then to me again: "There's so much that you'll have to teach me!"

By that time the big table at one side of the room had been converted into a sort of bar and one of the housemen was mixing drinks while the other passed them

around. But of course some of the guests were standing around getting their drinks direct from the bar, so when I stepped over, there was quite a gallery, some of them rather friendly toward me. An old fashioned with Scotch was nothing new to me, so I put it together very quickly, and when I got through two or three men laughed and gave me a little hand. When I went over with it to Mrs. Harris she was again talking about place kicks, and kept me standing there, glass in my hand. But as though to be very friendly, she raised her hand and without looking around put it on my arm. There was an exclamation from somebody and there went the cocktail all over her dress, and the orange, cherry and ice all over the floor.

I had served rush orders in a crowded cocktail bar with drunks elbowing me from every side and I assure you it is almost impossible to make me drop anything or do something clumsy like spilling a cocktail. That grip on my arm was like iron and it was deliberate. But there was nothing for me to do but get down and begin dabbing at her dress with my handkerchief, then call for a napkin and dry her off as best I could. All that time she talked a mile a minute, loudly proclaiming that it was all her fault, and that I mustn't mind, as the dress was an old rag anyhow, but there I was, stooped in front of her, making a holy show of myself when I wanted to be at my best.

It was Mr. Hunt who rescued me. He lifted me to my feet, patted my arm and drew me aside. Then for the first time Mrs. Harris became shrill. "But, Bernie, I'm wringing wet! Just look at my dress!"

"That's what we have dry cleaners for."

"And that's what we have such dresses for." It was Mrs. Hunt who said this, very grimly. "That's the third cocktail that's been spilled on it this year. Or was it a Tom Collins last time?"

Mrs. Harris' answer to this was to make a speech in which she said she didn't know what people were coming

to, the ill-bred way they got drunk and spilled drinks all over her, but Mrs. Hunt took me to another part of the room and that seemed to be the end of it. She gave me a cocktail and mumbled. "Don't worry about her dress. It's fast color, quick drying crepe, bought especially to have cocktails spilled on it and get women down on their knees and make them feel foolish. You behaved very well and you needn't give it a thought."

The man who had been passing cocktails came up just then and said: "She's here, Mrs. Hunt."

"Oh. Then you'd better take out some of those glasses and tell her to wash them up as quickly as she can, but don't wait for her to get through with them. You come back to keep things moving here, and have her bring them in as soon as they're ready."

"Yes, Mrs. Hunt."

She turned to me. "I did something I rarely do. I borrowed a maid from Mrs. Norris, but of course the children had to be taken to the park as usual and she has only now arrived—when it's almost all over."

"It's all been going beautifully."

"It's been going somehow, but I hate that clutter of used glasses at a cocktail party. The very idea that I might have been drinking out of somebody else's glass makes *me* squirm, and I don't see why my guests should feel differently."

It seemed like a trifling thing at the time but only too often in the weeks that followed I wished bitterly that one of the children had got lost in the park so that maid never arrived.

* * *

Mr. Hunt had disappeared, and now came up from downstairs and hurried over to his wife. "What do we do now?"

"What is it, Bernie?"

"The reporters and photographers. They've lined up

outside of the house three deep trying to get in and Gus is having a hard time to keep them out."

"You'd better call an officer."

He thought a moment, then said: "I wonder . . ."

She looked at him very intently and he rubbed his chin and thought a few moments. Then he said: "If that angelic mother of yours could be induced to pose for a few pictures with Grant and Carrie I have an idea this thing could be washed up right now."

"That'll never work."

"What the hell? Are you going to keep it up forever? She's married to him, she's been a perfectly delightful guest, she's all right. The thing to do is to tap this newspaper stuff and let some of the pressure off. Having all three of their pictures taken will turn the trick and then these headlines will die off so fast it'll amaze you."

Mrs. Hunt rather absent mindedly put her arm around me and shook her head. "I'm not thinking about her. She's been fine, and I take back all I said about her and –" with a little pat to me– "*to* her. But you can't trust mother. She'll *pull* something–"

"What can she pull?"

"She can pull nonsense you and I could never think of, and I'm warning you, you may be starting something that'll be dreadful before you get through with it."

"In these things I have a gift."

He went over to Mrs. Harris, who by now had decided to be in a gay mood again, and said something to her. She turned and came over to me, her arms outstretched, which seemed to be her regular way of approaching anybody. "But, darling, I'd simply *love* to. Why, of course– I had no idea the photographers were out there or I would have suggested it myself."

So Mr. Hunt went downstairs and next thing the photographers and reporters were trooping in, all very noisy and impudent, and a buzz of excited talk was going around the room and Mr. Hunt was asking everybody to

stand back a little to give the photographers a chance. So then Grant came over and put his arm around his mother and had tears in his eyes and I didn't believe for a second that she was as sweet as she pretended to be, but I was like Mr. Hunt: even if she didn't like me, having the picture taken would probably end all these terrible things in the newspapers, because if she accepted me, at any rate publicly, there couldn't be much left for the newspapers to say.

So we all lined up. At first the photographers wanted me in the middle, then they changed their minds and put Mrs. Harris in the middle, and then finally they decided it would be better with Grant in the middle, his arm around each of us. So then they told us to smile and yelled "hold it," and I was standing there with the grin pasted patiently on my face, when all of a sudden there was the most awful crash and everybody jumped and looked around.

* * *

It seemed a year before my mind could comprehend that who I was looking at was Lula Schultz, the girl who had shared the room with me at the Hotel Hutton and who had disappeared after we had the big quarrel over my staying out with Grant. She was the maid who had arrived late, and I found out later that after she quit her job at Karb's she had taken a place as a servant with Mrs. Norris. However, I didn't know any of that then, and all I was aware of was the mess on the floor and Lula staring at me and all the rest of them staring at the two of us. Then a reporter seemed to sense something, for he held up his hand to the photographers and for a moment there was absolute silence. Then Lula contributed her brilliant remark: "Well, for crying out loud, Carrie, where did you come from?"

Then the photographers woke up and for a minute or more it was like a madhouse, with the cameras clicking

first at Lula, standing there with the tray, the glasses all over the floor in front of her, then at me, then at Mrs. Harris and Grant, and it later turned out that one or two of them had got over into a corner to shoot the whole scene. All while they were taking pictures they were yelling at us in the most distespectful way. Then Mr. Hunt tried to take command and get Lula out of there and the mess cleared away, but all she would do was stand and gape and gabble at me that she seen all about it in the papers but she hoped she'd drop dead if she had any idea it was the same party she had been sent over to work at. She spoke terrible grammar, which is something I have always tried to avoid.

I was furious enough to break the tray over her head, but there was only one thing for me to do and I gritted my teeth and did it. I went over and shook hands with her as calmly as though it were nothing at all. That was when Mrs. Harris screeched: "Isn't she simply a *dear!* And mustn't she be thrilled! Imagine an old friend from the slums and meeting her here! It's such a small world!"

* * *

Somehow, by asking a number of his friends to help and practically using main force, Mr Hunt got the photographers and reporters out and Mrs. Hunt must have dealt with Lula for she wasn't there any more, and then for fifteen or twenty minutes everybody stood around and talked about it, except that when I approached they hurriedly began to talk about something else Then they all went, shaking hands with me very hurriedly, and then I found myself alone in the living room, as Grant, his three sisters and his mother having gone somewhere else. But in a moment Mr. Hunt came in, made two highballs and said: "Let's go in here--it's not so public."

He took me into a small library and closed the door. We sat down and sipped our drinks and he kept rubbing

the moisture on his glass with his thumb. Then he said: "I'm not sure, but I think that sinks you."

"You mean Lula?"

"Couldn't you have pretended it was a case of mistaken identity or something?"

"If I were sick or needed somebody she's the one person on earth that I could call on."

"I suppose there was nothing else you could do, but if you think the noble Grant is going to take a broad attitude toward it, you're very optimistic."

"Grant is not a complete fool."

"No, but he's a complete snob, and that's serious."

"I haven't seen any signs of it."

"Did you ever hear of the silver cord?"

"What's that?"

"An intangible but terrible bond, that sometimes exists between mother and son, and invariably spells trouble for them both. Not one thing about Grant is on the up-and-up except his interest in Indians. His phony radicalism, his rebellion against Uncle George, his nutty talk about breaking the system, and all the rest of it merely represent his feeble effort to break the silver cord, and whether he can do it I wouldn't like to say. But I know this much: Lula will give Mama a club over him that he'll feel from morning to night. And don't make any mistake about it: Grant is the worst snob of the lot."

"He married me. That doesn't look much like a snob."

"Masochism."

". . . *What* did you say?"

"Torturing himself, going out in the back yard and eating worms so Mama will feel ashamed of herself, for trying to make him marry Muriel."

"Why, by the way, *did* she try to make him do that?"

"Money, partly. With those two fortunes blended many things would be possible. But mainly because Muriel is a dull cluck of a girl that Mama wouldn't have to be

jealous of that Grant hates. The silver cord binds two ways."

"Why does she oppose the Indians?"

"Sadism."

"You're using words I'm not familiar with."

"She also likes to torture him, and she's not done yet."

"What else can she do?"

"One thing she can do is begin trotting around with some man. That's what she usually does, and when she starts it this time I predict Grant will go simply insane. I don't think you quite understand this yet. It's not pretty. It's unnatural, unhealthy and tragic. But it's what you're up against."

"You mean she wants to make him jealous as though she were some girl he was in love with—or that was in love with him?"

"Exactly. Except that it's a love that can never get anywhere. If you ask me, Mama has some strange youth complex. I think she resents Grant why Grant and not the other three I can't explain, except that he came first —because he compelled her to become a woman instead of the seventeen-year-old girl that she instinctively wants to be. When he arrived, that was the end of her youth. But it doesn't help any that her youth is still with her, so far as her appearance goes, and so is a habitual interest in men and a trained technique at getting them. As to her morals, I prefer not to speak. Grant had the misfortune to be born to a woman who could still be his sweetheart, and it's the blight of his life."

I didn't feel depressed or hysterical as I had felt before in these last few days. I merely felt cold and weak from encountering things that I didn't understand. Still, I heard myself say: "Well—what am I going to do about it?"

"Perhaps there's nothing you can do about it. Reckoning condition of the track, form of the starters and confidential information from the paddock, I would rate

your chances at about one to ninety-nine. If it were myself, I think I'd scratch my entry and be done with it. Of course you may feel differently."

To that I made no reply. He sipped his drink, then came over to me, sat on the arm of my chair and turned my face up to him. "I like you, for some reason. I could see your head working in there this afternoon. You played your cards well and if there's one thing I enjoy it's seeing somebody lead into dummy, finesse through trouble and win through a grand slam. But you haven't got the cards, that's all. I'm on your side, and if there's anything I can do you can call on me. But what I really think is: You're sunk."

* * *

When we went back in the living room everybody except Grant had gone and he had his hat and stick and was waiting for me. I thanked Mrs. Hunt and she said it had been a pleasure, but her eyes had the same glassy look I had seen in her mother's and I knew that her little flurry of friendliness was over and that so far as she was concerned the whole thing had been a fiasco that would not be repeated.

Grant and I walked down Madison a few blocks, then crossed over and had dinner at a place on Fifty-fifth Street. There would be long silences and then he would talk feverishly about things like the Army Air Force and the new planes they were building. It was well after eight when we left the Hunts and it must have been ten o'clock when we got through dinner. We walked down Fifth Avenue to Fifty-fourth Street, then over toward the apartment. As we crossed Third Avenue a truck was unloading tabloids at a newsstand. I stopped and bought one and there, sure enough, was the first of those terrible pictures that came out showing Lula at the cocktail party with numbers all over it and down at the bottom the names,

corresponding to the numbers, of all the prominent people who were present. We started along again but as we went I was looking at the paper. Suddenly he stopped, snatched the paper out of my hand and threw it down on the pavement. He ran toward it and kicked it, then kicked it again and again until it was just a litter of pages flying all over the street. Then he stood there panting, and I knew that everything Mr. Hunt had said was true. He hated that picture, hated Lula and I think at that moment hated me. In spite of all his fine talk he was really what money, education and family had made him, a snob who had no respect for what my life had made me. A terrible sense of helpless pain swept over me, of being hurt more than I knew I could be hurt, and it was then that I knew how much I loved him and how desperately I had to fight, even if the chances were one to ninety-nine against me.

Part III

THE SNAKE

Nine

From then on Grant and I were almost strangers to each other. There were times when we forgot everything else and were terribly close, but they were merely occasional interludes in what was beginning to feel like the unreal dreams one has in a fever. The newspapers were only incidental so far as I was concerned. What made it so terrible was Grant and the grim, hunted look he had all the time, and especially when he came back to the apartment after going out for a little while, and I knew he had seen his family or his friends or somebody and had felt compromised and embarrassed in talking with them.

However, the worst was yet to come, for I wasn't done yet with Lula Schultz. On the Monday after the cocktail party, about ten o'clock in the morning, a few minutes after Grant had gone down to his office to pick up his mail, she had shown up. The desk phoned in a very queer way that a woman was in the lobby to see me. I told them to send her up and when I opened the door there she was, a straw suitcase in one hand and looking like something that had come out of a bread line. Her eyes were red, her face pasty, her clothes all bedraggled, and when she saw me she swayed as though she were about to fall. I caught her and brought her inside, then hastily went out and took in the suitcase, for the elevator man was still

there, staring as though he could hardly believe his eyes When I got inside she was half lying on the big sofa and began to talk in her usual rough and ungrammatical way. "I hope I may drop dead, Carrie, I never meant to ask anything off you. I wasn't going to bother you, but I couldn't pass out right in Central Park, could I? Being drug down to Bellevue in a police car wouldn't do you no good. Soon as I give my name them papers would have started in on you all over again. I know 'em. They don't never give you no break."

"Central Park? What are you talking about?"

"A wooden bench, Carrie. With a bum on one end of it and me on the other, and newspapers in the middle. Where I spent last night and the night before without room service. They didn't send up no meals."

"You slept on a park bench?"

"I didn't do very good after I left my happy home in the Hutton. Took that job minding babies till I could find something better, but a fat chance I could hold that after I dropped them canapes all over the floor. Sweet heart, I'm telling you, Lady Norris was a little annoyed I got fired fast, but not so fast I didn't get a sweet bawling out. Carrie, you'd of died laughing if you'd heard what *I* told *her*. Then was when I begun to live in the park."

"Didn't you get paid off?" I asked this in all sincerity, for it did seem peculiar that she had to live in the park immediately after getting her money. As to how this came about I was to find out much more later, but in view of her exhausted condition, or what at any rate *appeared* to be her exhausted condition, I didn't press her too hard when she became, as I thought, extremely vague.

"Circumstances, Carrie just circumstances. They drive me nuts Say, you got something to eat in the house? My stomach is a little empty, if you know what I mean."

I got her a glass of milk, for I thought if she hadn't eaten in forty eight hours, as seemed to be the case, she had better be a little careful about how she resumed her

relations with food. Then I said something about making her some coffee and went out in the kitchen again and put the water on to heat, but what I was really doing was getting off by myself for a few minutes so I could think what I was going to do with her. I had got to the point of calculating that if I jumped in a taxi and dashed over to the bank very quickly I could draw $50, give it to her and get her out of there before Grant came home. I even improved on this by deciding I would take her to the bank with me and then I wouldn't risk her being there if he got home while I was gone.

But then something in me began to rebel. In the first place, I felt that if it had been *I* who had spent two nights in a park and *she* who was living in a comfortable apartment, there would be no question of getting me out of there at all. I would be taken in simply as a matter of course, and in spite of the complicated trick that she was playing on me, as it later turned out, I still believe that this much, at least, she would have done for me. And in the second place, as I had pointed out to Mr. Hunt, Lula was the one person, aside from Mr Holden, perhaps, who had meant something to me before I married Grant, and in some instinctive way I knew that I must not give her up. I stood looking out into the bright sunlight, waiting for the water to boil, and there popped into my mind a recollection of the big waves racing past the boat while the sun was still shining that afternoon on the Sound, and I had the same tingling sensation that a storm was coming up. But this time, whether there would be a buoy to grab I wasn't at all sure.

* * *

In addition to the coffee I made Lula soft-boiled eggs and toast and she began gobbling them down there in the living room. Later, in some connection, I learned

that people who have not eaten for some time are not at all hungry and have to force themselves to eat. But at the time Lula's appetite seemed wholly natural, and I left her there for a while to do what I had to do.

There was a den in the apartment that Grant used as a storage place for a lot more Indian stuff than there was space for in the living room. But there was a cot in there and this I made up with clean sheets, pillow cases and blankets. Among the things stored in there were a bundle of Navajo blankets. I cut the string on this and spread a couple of them on the floor so the room wouldn't feel so bare. The rest of them, as well as the other things, I piled as neatly as I could in one corner of the room, draped a sheet over them and called Lula. She came in and I went into the living room and got her suitcase. When I came back she had lifted the sheet and was peeping at the Indian things. But she dropped it when she saw me and I pretended not to notice. Then I suggested that she go to bed and get some sleep. She didn't want to, but I insisted and helped her undress. She had no clean pajamas in her suitcase but I got a suit of my own and pretty soon I had her tucked in. I pulled the shade to keep the sun out of her eyes and went in the living room to wait for Grant. It was nearly one o'clock when he came in and at once suggested that we go out somewhere for lunch. I still had this tingling sensation all over me, and my mouth felt dry and hot, because I knew I had to tell him about Lula, and yet I couldn't seem to begin. So I said all right but I wasn't hungry yet, and he went in the bedroom.

When he came out he lit a cigarette, inhaled it nervously three or four times, then squashed it out and looked at me. "May I make a request?"

"Certainly."

"Well there are certain little decencies around an apartment I like to observe. I realize that women have their own ways of doing things. Just the same—damn it,

this is what I'm trying to say: do you mind in the future not using the bathroom for a laundry?"

I got up and went into the bathroom. It was the worst mess I had ever seen in my life, even worse than our bathroom at the Hutton used to be on the infrequent occasions when Lula had decided that her things were too dirty to wear any more and that she had to wash them. She had tied two or three strings across the room and they were full of stockings, brassieres, and everything else imaginable. The beautiful porcelain hand-basin was full of rings, dirt and soap where she hadn't washed it out properly after she got done, and even the bathtub was draped with more of her things drying, such as girdles. And in addition to that, you could hardly breathe for the horrible stench of laundry drying.

I jerked down the strings, gathered everything up into one armful and went in to where she was lying in bed smoking a cigarette. I dumped the whole wet pile over her head, turned on my heel and walked out. Then I went back in the living room.

I sat down, closed my eyes and tried to begin. But all I could say was: "They weren't my things."

"Then whose were they?"

". . . Lula's."

"Who is Lula?"

"The maid at the cocktail party."

I think I have told you that Grant is very heavily sunburned and under that there is usually a touch of his mother's high color. As he looked at me and realized the implication of what I had said I saw every bit of the color slowly leave his face until it was like gray chalk. ". . . You mean she's here?"

"She got fired. She had no place to stay. I took her in."

"I—don't *want* her here."

"Neither do I."

"Then what did you let her in for?"

"I had to."

"Why?"

"She would have done the same for me."

"But good God, we can't have her here. Why—I won't have it! I—"

"I *will* have it."

"You—? *You'll* have it?"

"I invited her in. It's my home."

Afterwards I liked to remember that Grant did not get excited when I told him that or say that it was *his* home and I had only recently been brought into it, or anything like that. In these trying days Grant constantly seemed like a weak, spineless creature and helpless in the hands of his mother for reasons that he could not at that time help. But meanness was never a part of him. There was a generosity in him that I could always count on and this was one reason why, even when I had the most contempt for him, some little part of me was always proud of him and confident that he would never strike at me in some unfair way.

"I thought it was *our* home."

That touched me and I started to cry. He bounded over, put his arms around me and pulled me close to him. "What have you got that bum here for, Carrie? We can't have her come between us! To hell with her! We -"

I pushed him away and stood up. More than anything I wanted to be in his arms and getting myself clear left me weak and trembling. But I drove myself to say what I had to say. "Grant!"

"Yes, Carrie, what is it?"

"That girl has to stay here."

"All right, Carrie. I don't get it, it seems to me a little money would dispose of her case a whole lot better, but if you say she stays she stays. But keep her out of sight, will you? I don't want to see her. I—"

"I will not keep her out of sight."

"I warn you, Carrie, you had better keep her away from me or I won't be responsible for what I—"

"You are going to accept her."

"That—*servant girl?*"

"That servant girl is going to live with us until she can find some other place, she is going to eat with us—"

"With *you*. You can count me out."

"With *us!*"

I fairly screamed it. Understand, I wasn't saying exactly what I meant. Because by this time I had made up my mind that as soon as he accepted Lula, Lula was going out the door as fast as her legs would carry her, and her wet wash along with her. But I was not going to tell him this until I had gained my point.

When I yelled at him he lit another cigarette, sat down and waited a few moments, evidently to regain some sort of calm. Then he looked at me, smiled in what was meant to be a friendly way, and said: "There's something back of this, Carrie. All right—here I am. I'm acting reasonably, I hope. I'm not trying to stir up a fight. Now will you tell me what it is? In words of one syllable, so I understand it all?"

"Yes."

"All right, then, shoot."

"Grant, I'm calm too—if you'll overlook that little outbreak just now—and I'm not trying to stir up a fight either. This is what lies back of it. You think you're objecting to Lula. That's not it. You're really objecting to me."

"Why, that's ridiculous."

"You think it is, but it isn't. Grant, Lula is my friend. She's almost the only friend I've got. I admit she's not much of a friend. I wish she was different. I bitterly wish she was different. But she's not different. Lula is the world I came from. Perhaps it's not much of a world, I don't know. But it was my world and I can't change it. The trouble with you is, you're trying to pretend I was not

part of that world at all. You're trying to convince yourself that in some ways I was an exception, that I didn't really belong in that world. Well, I'm an exception. I've got more gump than most girls in that world have got and I've found out by now that I've got more brains. I do better than they do. I make more money and I have more ambition. But whether I'm an exception or not, I was a part of that world and I'm still part of it. If it wasn't for you, money would take care of Lula's case, and I have money, anyhow a little bit, and I would be willing to take care of it. But I can't keep you out of it. As you say, there you are, and if you don't accept Lula you don't accept me. I have done my best to accept your friends, to say nothing of your family. I have conquered my pride, eaten their bread and drunk their liquor, even when they told me I wasn't welcome. You are going to do the same. When you sit down to the table and eat dinner with me and Lula Schultz, then I'll know that it's not true, some of the things that people say about you."

"What do people say about me?"

". . . That was a slip. I shouldn't mention things that have been said about you, and I'm sorry."

"I asked what they say about me."

"They say you're a snob."

"All right. Perhaps I am."

"I don't really care what you are, Grant. I'm a snob, too, in a way. I'm terribly conceited and always thinking I'm more capable than other people and I don't care about that either. You can be what you are and I'll not complain. But *you'll have to accept me*. I'll take no less."

"I accept you but I will not accept this—Lula. Whatever her name is."

"Grant, whenever I have something difficult I always try to think it over a little before I come to a decision. Will you do that much for me?"

He came over, put his arms around me again and stood with me a long time, giving me little pats on the arm. "I'll

think it over, Carrie. But I know in advance the decision I'll come to. I'll not accept Lula."

* * *

So he didn't accept her, and she stayed on and on and on. Every afternoon she would go out on the pretense of seeking work but would be back by five thirty, in time for dinner, for she always seemed to have a big appetite. But Grant hardly ever saw her. He left the apartment long before she got up, around nine o'clock most mornings, and didn't come home until eleven or twelve at night.

Two or three days of this was bad enough, but when the story of my life began to run in one of the tabloids it was even worse. They had everything in there, from the orphan asylum to my girlhood on the farm, to my job as a waitress in Nyack, but they had it all garbled up, and although it was written in such a way as to seem friendly to me, it made your skin crawl, the things they put in. It was not signed, so it was impossible to tell who was writing it. The night after it started when Grant came home, I tried to get him to do something about it as it seemed to me they had no right to print my life story unless I gave my consent. But he merely shrugged his shoulders and said it didn't make any difference. Next day I called Mr. Hunt and he said he would consult a lawyer. But the next morning when he called me back, he said the lawyer had told him they did have the right, provided the story was not malicious, and that while I could seek an injunction, if I wanted to, the probability was that I wouldn't be successful.

I told him never mind, and the horrible story kept running and running, and when it got to the point of my marriage with Grant it revealed shockingly intimate details of our life together, until I thought I would go insane from reading it. Yet all I could do was sit every morning and every evening with Lula and listen to her gabble

about how badly Grant treated me and what she would do if she were in my place.

* * *

One day around lunch time Grant came in with his mother. She made herself very agreeable, and I said nothing to indicate there had been any unpleasantness between us. I remembered that she liked an old-fashioned with Scotch, got out the tray and made her one, gave Grant a rye highball, and waited for her to say what she wanted. She came to the point very quickly. Smiling at me so that her eyes didn't look like glass at all, she said: "I hear a little situation has developed in connection with the young lady who is staying here."

My first impulse was to look surprised and act as though I couldn't imagine what situation she meant, but on second thought I decided that frankness would probably be the better policy. So I said: "Yes, I'm afraid that's true."

"You feel some sense of loyalty to the girl, Grant tells me."

"I feel some sense of that, and I also feel that she represents something I have to make an issue over with Grant. If I back down on Lula I've lost everything. I've renounced what I was, I can't change myself into something else, and that will leave me being exactly nothing at all. I won't be that."

"In your place I wouldn't either."

She smiled then and turned to Waldo. "It's just as I told you—a question of pride. Not stubbornness, not stupidity, not capriciousness. It's pride, pure and simple, and you have to respect it."

"I respect it, but I don't respect Lula."

She sipped her cocktail, smiled at me again and, although I knew I couldn't for a second trust her, I felt myself yielding to the charm she could turn on when she wanted. "May I call you Carrie?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Harris."

"Then, Carrie, why don't you let me step in with a plan that might relieve the whole difficulty?"

"I would be delighted if you could."

"The girl, as I understand it, is out of work. Very well, then I'll give her a job."

I didn't know what to say about this. It didn't meet the issue I had spoken of, and yet I was so sick of Lula and so miserable about the point I had come to with Grant, that I only wished to wash my hands of the whole mess and start over again, if that was possible. She must have sensed what was in my mind, because she quickly went on to admit that it didn't quite settle anything, but pointed out that it wasn't exactly a clear issue since Grant's objections to the girl were more personal than social, and that the main thing was that he and his family see my point of view, and that this was what she was trying to do. So then I weakly sidestepped the whole thing by saying it wasn't really up to me at all; it was up to Lula. So then they both looked at each other and she said of course that was it, and there was nothing I could do but call Lula. She came out, and I had one crumb of satisfaction, that she didn't even try to sit down in the presence of Mrs. Harris, but stood there, first on one foot and then on the other, saying yes ma'am and no ma'am in a frightened way that showed her up for the servant girl she really was.

Mrs. Harris had nothing to say to her of what we had been talking about but merely offered her a job and told her the pay and a few other things about it. But when Lula got it through her head what was meant she at once acted very shifty and confused, and said she would have to think it over before she could give her answer. Mrs. Harris said if there was something she wanted to talk to *me* about privately and she very carefully called me "Mrs. Harris" in Lula's presence -she would be very glad to wait. But Lula said it wasn't that. She had the offer of a job somewhere, but she wouldn't know until late this

afternoon when she returned from Brooklyn, where she had to go to see about it.

I had heard nothing up to then about any job that she had, but almost before Mrs. Harris had got through saying she would stop by again later in the afternoon Lula was gone. She disappeared, grabbed her hat and streaked out of the apartment without saying a word to me or anybody. Grant, however, acted as though a great load had been lifted from his mind and proposed that all three of us go to lunch, and this we did, walking up to the Plaza. Many people came up and spoke to us, and Mrs. Harris presented them to me in the most respectful way, and yet all the time we were eating I kept having an uneasy feeling that something lurked back of it and that I didn't know what it was.

But I had to find out, if I could, so I suggested to Grant that he take his mother to a matinee, and off they went. I jumped in a cab, came home and called Mr. Hunt at his office. He knew nothing about Mrs. Harris's scheme for Lula but at once warned me there must be something wrong with it. Then he thought for a moment or two and told me that his guess would be that Mrs. Harris would issue invitations to a large party in my honor, knowing all the time that with Lula in the house I would not dare attend. Then I would be put in the position with Grant of refusing to have anything to do with his mother. It dawned on me then the clever trick that Mrs. Harris was trying to play on me. For the result would be, so long as she had Lula in her house, that I would not dare go there and probably Grant wouldn't either, for that matter. Thus, while getting credit in Grant's eyes for doing something very gracious about Lula, she would be driving a wedge between me and Grant that could only sink deeper all the time.

I knew then that I had to do something about Lula, but I still didn't want to put myself in the position of

backing down on my point. If I could make it appear that Lula had got a job herself, and in that way I got rid of her, at any rate I had stood by my guns, and while Grant had also stood by his, he and the whole family had found out I was not to be trifled with.

Ten

As soon as Mr. Hunt hung up I called Mr. Holden. He was at his hotel, fortunately, and almost before I had time to take the cocktail tray out of the living room and put some fresh ice and glasses on it he was announced and then I let him in and he was walking around looking at everything in a very interested way and making comments on everything he saw. He seemed to know a great deal about American history and when he picked up one of the Aztec knives, told me I should read Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico" and I would "find out how quick the ruling class can tear a man's heart out," as he put it. Some other time I would have been pleased to hear intelligent remarks about Grant's work, but just then I didn't care how the ruling classes tore out hearts. I told him about Lula, and when I got to the things in the bathroom he laughed loudly and didn't wait to hear any more. "So you want somebody to take her off your hands?"

"Dead or alive."

"That's easy. Where's your telephone?"

"What are you going to do?"

"Put in a call."

I took him in the bedroom and stood there while he picked up the receiver, but he cocked his head on one side in a way that meant get out, so there was nothing

for me to do but leave him there and close the door. I could hear him talking some little time, and started to make him a brandy and soda. Then I remembered he didn't drink, and I had a cup of coffee waiting for him by the time he was through. He came back in the living room, sat down beside the coffee, thanked me for it and laughed. "It's all arranged."

"What did you do?"

"Found her a job."

"Where?"

"Karb's."

"But they're on strike. There's no job for her there."

"Oh, yes, there is. Strike-breaker."

He said this as though it were an amusing piece of news, but I was greatly startled by it. "Do you mean to say that you, a union organizer, actually proposed that Karb's take on a strike-breaker?"

"They've already taken on fifty or so I heard. I haven't been in close touch with the thing lately. One more won't hurt."

"But it's—asking a favor of the enemy."

"In all warfare there's an occasional exchange of prisoners. It makes things simple."

"I don't believe you're unfriendly with Karb's at all."

"I? Unfriendly with Karb's? I should say not. Carrie, the wars are fought on the field. The treaties are signed on a table. But a table discussion should be carried on by gentlemen who understand each other. I always observe the courtesies of the field for the sake of the discussion at the table. Asking a harmless little favor with a wink in my eye—"

"They didn't see the wink."

"They felt it. It traveled over the wires by a rare form of television."

"In other words, you're a Welshman."

"I am not. I am a naturalized American, 100%."

He took a little American flag out of his pocket, made

out of silk and attached to a pin, and stuck it in his lapel, and it was all so silly I couldn't help but laugh. We sat and drank coffee and he talked about the labor movement and then Lula came in and he certainly made quick work of her. She didn't want to take the job at first, said her Brooklyn opening would materialize in a week and until it did she wanted to stay with me. He brushed this aside at once and then she said she wouldn't be a strike-breaker at Karb's because this would make her a scab. He said in reality she wouldn't be a strike-breaker at all but a union spy, "particularly noble and above reproach," as he put it, and then he turned very hard and stern and in almost no time he made her pack and bundled her out of there so fast I hardly had time to slip her the ten dollars I had decided to give her. We were still laughing about how simple it all had been when the door opened, and Grant came in with his mother.

* * *

They stood there looking at us and for a moment I didn't know what to do and didn't much care what I did, to tell the truth, as I was so happy over the great load that had been lifted from my mind, but Mr. Holden took charge in a most impressive way. He bowed as though he were in some royal palace, and without waiting for me to introduce him he recalled himself to Grant and there was nothing for Grant to do but introduce Mr. Holden to his mother, which he did very coldly. On their side it was all very stiff and snooty, but this didn't faze Mr. Holden a bit. He laughed and said: "We're celebrating a deliverance."

"Oh?"

Grant tried to sound casual but the quick way he turned his head showed he was quite curious.

"Yes, the lovely Lula has had an offer of employment, has accepted it, and taken her sad farewell. Not that it didn't break her heart. But she went."

Mrs. Harris sat down at this piece of news, stared at Mr. Holden and seemed to turn into a block of ice. But Grant, as it finally got through his head, started to laugh and said: "So. She took it. And I thought that Brooklyn job was a phony."

"Oh, it wasn't the Brooklyn job. My, my, the lady had all sorts of offers, didn't she? All tributes to her sterling character, no doubt. No, this was still another job. I had the honor of being bearer of the happy tidings and now, having discharged my historic function, as Trotsky would have put it, I'll be on my way."

He got up, but Grant still stood between him and the door and didn't move. They were facing each other for a moment, and then Grant laughed again. "Holden, I think you're a liar."

"Others have thought so but I've survived it."

"I think Carrie called you up and asked you to get that nuisance out of here so she could sidestep all these imaginary issues she's been raising. Right?"

"Since I'm already called a liar my testimony on that point would be worthless."

"Anyway, thanks—and let's have a drink."

"More coffee would be fine."

I felt so happy I almost forgot it was I who had to make the coffee, since what I had already served was cold by now, and then when I did go out in the kitchen I couldn't remember where anything was and it all took me a long time. But when I finally did get back with the coffee, and an old fashioned with Scotch for Mrs. Harris and rye and seltzer for Grant, things were very unpleasant in there. Mrs. Harris's voice sounded shrill, as it had that afternoon at the cocktail party, and she was telling Grant that since she had gone to all this trouble to give the girl work she thought the least that was due her was that she be consulted before anything was done about Lula. Grant told her she was forgetting that the only person who had any real say in the matter was Lula and that it was a free

country and that Lula had done what she wanted to do. I said nothing, but served the things I had brought, and was so glad I had turned the tables on her that I didn't trust myself to say anything at all. Grant was happy too, although of course he never for a moment penetrated what his mother was up to, and wanted to smooth things down. He raised his glass to Mr Holden, who raised his coffee cup. Then he raised his glass to me and I raised my coffee cup, but when he raised his glass to Mrs. Harris she made no move toward her old-fashioned but went right on with her tirade. Then Grant, Mr. Holden and myself sipped in silence while she talked, getting louder all the time, and then Grant got impatient with her and began to talk back, saying it was his home, not hers, and I sat back and wondered whether I could purr if I tried.

During all of this Mr. Holden said not a word but coldly studied her. She had got up by now and was yelling down at Grant, where he still sat taking quick gulps out of his highball and nervously drawing at a cigarette. Mr. Holden got up, went over to where they were and put his arms around her. She jerked around, raised her face to his, and her eyes were simply horrible to see. But he smiled down at her, laid his fingers on her cheek and patted it. "Now why get excited? They're two misguided youngsters, wholly incapable of dealing with the simplest problem, but we don't care, do we?"

"Oh, don't *we?*"

"No—let's leave them to stew in their own juice, which is really what they want to do, for some reason beyond my comprehension. Let's go and have dinner, you and me. I'll forsake my principles and drink a bottle of wine with you, a pale white wine which will pick up the color of your hair . . . Yes?"

Her eyes grew large and soft, and her whole face took on a dreamy, yielding look. She didn't answer him at once, but looked away from him as though she were seeing

stars somewhere in the distance, then took his hand in hers and spoke in a whisper: "I just love the pale white wines."

They barely took time to say their goodbyes, and then were gone. I suppose he was doing it all for me, and yet I couldn't escape a little twinge of jealousy, or whatever it was, as I watched them go down in the elevator, she looking up at him, he still smiling down at her, for I had probably come to regard him as my property, even if I was married, and I somehow hated the idea of her taking him away from me. But when I went back to the living room I forgot all about that. Grant was still sitting there, a horrible look on his face. For the first time in my life I knew I was looking into the eyes of a killer. I suddenly remembered what Mr. Hunt had told me about Grant's jealousy, and realized why Mrs. Harris had gone out with Mr. Holden and who that look of death was meant for. I was face to face with the real spectre that haunted my marriage.

I prefer not to tell the details of the scene that followed, of what he said, which sounded like the ravings of a lunatic, or of his threats to strangle his mother and Mr. Holden to death. It was frightful and lasted until a late hour. I tried to get him to go out with me for dinner but he wouldn't even hear me, and so I fixed something with what was in the icebox and got him to eat a little of it. But when he quieted down it was even worse, for he seemed to have decided on something, I didn't know what. About eleven o'clock he flung out of the apartment and I at once telephoned Mr. Hunt, to warn him that there might be trouble. Mr. Hunt thanked me and hung up very quickly, and then it was my turn almost to go insane from worrying about what was going to happen. About half past twelve I got a call from Mr. Hunt saying that Grant had been to his mother's house and that there had been a terrible fight, but that fortunately Mr. Holden

had already gone home after bringing her back from dinner and that, for the moment at least, there would be no violence. Some time after that Grant came home and I managed to get him to bed, but once more there came an outbreak of those sobs which had aroused in me such a peculiar mixture of contempt and pity.

For the next two or three days he hardly seemed to know I was around, and then took to leaving the apartment, as he had while Lula was there. To make it worse, Mr. Holden did not stop taking Mrs. Harris to dinner once but kept on going around with her. But a columnist got hold of it, for of course a society woman going around with a labor leader was news, and if Grant had been insane before, he turned into a gibbering idiot now. Through a phone call that came in for him one day, when I heard a secretary at the other end say something while I was holding the line, I discovered that he had employed private detectives to trail his mother, and then I knew I had to act.

I called Mr. Holden, got him at his hotel, and pleaded with him not to see Mrs. Harris any more. He listened and laughed. "This is what I've been waiting for, Carrie. It makes my heart sing. So it *does* matter to you, when I start trotting around with another woman?"

"It's not that at all. I—I didn't mean to tell you this. I don't *want* to tell you, and I'm only doing it so you'll understand why I called. It's not on my account. It's on account of my husband."

"What has your husband got to do with it?"

"He—he's jealous of his mother."

I could feel my face getting hot at the cackle of laughter he let out at the other end of the phone, and only half heard what he said about Grant's being a mama's boy, and other things of that kind. But then I cut in on him: "Please don't talk like that any more. This is serious. He—he might kill you. He might kill her. He might kill you

both. He's set detectives on your trail already and I'm terrified. Haven't you any regard for your life?"

"It'll be nothing new for me to be shot at. In my business I meet many a fine buck who wants to kill me, and some of them have even hired private thugs to do it. But I'm still here, and I haven't stopped a bullet yet."

"You will if you keep this up."

"I'll drop Mrs. Harris like a hot cake on one condition."

"Name it. It's granted."

"That you put an end to that silly marriage and come with me to the Coast. I've been ordered West, and I have real work to do. We'll take the plane tonight, do whatever has to be done about your divorce, and that will be the end of Mrs. Harris the Younger and Mrs. Harris the Elder. She's not so elderly, by the way. She's still quite romantic."

". . . I can't grant that condition."

"Did you hear what I said? She's not at all elderly."

"Yes, I heard what you said."

I must have sounded very miserable, for his tone changed, and he said: "Carrie, why aren't you honest with me? You don't like it when I tell you she's romantic, and that's the real reason you called me."

"No, it's not at all—"

"*It is!* Are you trying to tell me that I mean less to you than that whippersnapper you're married to? You've trifled with me—and with *him*—long enough. Come back to one of your kind—"

"I'm sorry. I can't."

In spite of the harsh words he used he had spoken as though I belonged to him, and I knew I was cutting him to the quick when I still turned him down. There was a long silence at the other end of the line and when he spoke his voice was muffled and strange. "Then it's 'no'?"

"I'm afraid it is."

"Then—" his voice was clear and hard this time -"I'm

afraid it's 'no' with me too, Carrie. I have my pride too, and the lady likes me."

* * *

Some time during all this Lula began visiting me in the afternoons after she got off, to sympathize with me over the way I was being treated and to give me news of the strike, which, it appeared, was about to be settled. I didn't want to see her, I didn't want to see anybody, and yet I had reached such a state that I dreaded being alone, for all I could find to do with myself was sit and read the books on finance which Grant had accumulated in connection with his position at Harris, Hunt and Harris. I dipped into the Indian books too, but found finance more interesting, and was surprised to see how much of it I could understand, especially when I began to follow daily the financial pages of the New York *Times*. Money, in all its phases, as I have mentioned before, is continually fascinating to me.

However, although this helped pass the time, I was lonely and nervous and when Lula showed up I would sit with her just for the sake of company. I always brought her into the kitchen so if Grant came home unexpectedly I could get her out and he wouldn't know she had been there. But he was always very late, so she would usually stay until nine or ten o'clock, of course eat her dinner with me, which I would have to prepare, and leave before he came.

* * *

One night we talked and talked and talked, and I could hear my mouth say feverish, excited things that seemed to have no meaning and then say them all over again, for I didn't have my mind on what we were talking about at all. Then I realized that Lula didn't either, and that she

was eyeing me in a very strange way. Then I looked at my watch and it was half-past one, and I realized why I had been behaving as I had. Down deep inside of me I knew that Grant wasn't coming home, and that was what I had been fighting off.

Lula caught my wrist and looked at my watch too, and came out with her usual remark, which was: "Well, for crying out loud."

"I think I'm a little fast."

"You ain't fast. It's late, Carrie. It's that late I'm almost afraid to go home, but I didn't want to leave you here, all alone in this place well, ain't he the louse! I declare, it's a shame, the way he treats you "

"He's no louse, and how he treats me is my own affair. He had business—in Newark. He—"

"Newark? He told you that? He—"

"He's had to take a late train!"

"Train, my eye! Don't you get it, Carrie? He's walked out on you. It's the old powder he's taken. He's not coming home—"

I almost threw her out. When I had myself under some kind of control I went in the living room and sat by the window and waited. I saw the milk wagon horse come up Second Avenue, saw the sun come up over the river, saw the people hurrying over toward the Lexington Avenue subway to go to work. He didn't come.

* * *

Around nine o'clock I went in and bathed and changed my clothes. I was making myself some coffee when I heard the papers delivered outside. I hate things lying in an apartment hallway, so I went out and got them. Once more my picture was all over the front page of the tabloid that had been running the story of my life, and there was the headline:

I knew then who had been giving them all their information about my girlhood, my life with Grant and all the rest of it, why Lula had stayed with us, why she kept coming back, even after she had been put out. I put on my hat and coat, went downstairs, had the doorman get me a cab and went over to the address she had given me. It was a rooming house. To save herself the climb of announcing me the woman gave me the room number and told me to go on up. And there, sure enough, was Lula, lying on a sofa in a negligee, smoking. A newspaper man whom I remembered from Mrs. Hunt's cocktail party was sitting in a chair writing in a notebook. Another was at a typewriter that had been placed in one corner of the room.

I went over to Lula and without waiting for her to say, "Well, for crying out loud," I slapped her face. She jumped up, her eyes blazing, and I slapped her again, and that time I knocked her down. I went over to the typewriter, pulled out the sheet that was in the machine, scooped up all the other sheets I could see and tore them up. I went over to the man with the notebook, and he backed into a corner and tried to shove it into his pocket. I picked up a chair, drove straight at his head with it and he went down. I grabbed the notebook and tore that up. It must have taken me a minute to tear all the pages into little pieces, but I made a thorough job of it and all during that time the three of them, two on the floor and one behind the typewriter, merely blinked at me. Not a word was spoken.

On the floor Lula's cigarette was beginning to burn a hole in the carpet. I went over, stepped on it, turned on my heel and walked out.

Eleven

I got into another cab, went down to Mr. Holden's hotel and walked up to the desk. "Mrs. Harris calling on Mr. Holden."

"Yes, Mrs. Harris. Mr. Holden left word you were to come right up."

I was so wrought up from loss of sleep and what had happened with Lula that I was in the elevator before it occurred to me how surprising that was, that he was expecting me and had left word for me to come up. Then it occurred to me that it might be the other Mrs. Harris, Grant's mother, that he was expecting, and I had a panicky impulse to have the elevator take me down again and run away without seeing him at all. However, it was me he was expecting, for I was no sooner in his apartment before he put his arms around me and drew me very close, and he was so sincere about it that it was impossible to resent it. Indeed, I didn't want to resent it, for it felt so good to be loved, regardless of what I was, that I put my arms around him too, and when he kissed me I kissed back, and held him close and felt very deeply moved. So, when he told me how he had called me up as soon as he read the paper, and had then been waiting for me to come, it was all the harder for me to state my business, for it wasn't what he thought it was at all.

I took from my handbag the bank book showing the deposit I had made as treasurer of the union, as well as the small account book which gave the names of the members, and all other records insofar as I had anything to do with them. I then made out a check payable to him

covering the whole amount and laid it all down in front of him. "There. I think you'll find that everything balances, and you can endorse the check over to whoever is elected to take over my duties."

"Well, well, well! I never saw such a grim face in my life or such neat columns of figures. What is this, Carrie?"

"I'm quitting as treasurer of the union."

"Tut, tut."

"I can't go on with it."

"I wasn't asking you to go on with it, and I've little interest today in the treasurer of the union. It's a sweet red-haired girl I have my mind on, but—let's get it over with. What's come up between you and the union? They settled the strike, by the way."

"Nothing's come up between me and the union, but I think I'm going into business and I have to square up all accounts."

"You've walked out on Grant, Lula and the union. All right, besides business, now what?"

". . . I don't know."

"I do. You take off your hat and stay here."

He was so simple and honest, and it seemed so fine, after all the turmoil and mean schemes I had faced, that I ached to take off my hat, as he said, and let him take charge of me from then on. But I knew the pain inside of me wouldn't stop if I did. Yet now I knew he was a part of my life, something he had not really been before, and that I had to be honest with him. I got up, put my arms around him, pulled his head down and kissed him. "I want to say something."

"I'm listening to you, Carrie."

"I think you're swell."

"Go on."

"I think you mean more to me than I ever realized you did. I think in a little while I'll be able to think about you in the way you want me to, and then perhaps I'll mean still more to you."

"If that's possible."

"It's possible. . . . But now -I've got to face this thing out. You're wrong if you think I married Grant for money, position or anything else except the one reason you would respect. I loved him and you have to let me get through this in my own way."

"Then I'm not to see you?"

"I *want* to see you. You'll have to let me see you – because I haven't anybody else. But oh, I'm all mixed up."

"We'll talk about the weather, is that it?"

"Yes. And I'm afraid we'll talk about Grant too, and I'll be a terrible nuisance, and –"

"I've a fine idea. We won't talk at all. Would you like that?"

I pulled him to me again and we stood there for a few minutes, very close, not talking at all.

* * *

There was no taxi when I went out on the street so I started to walk, but I had a sensation in my legs as though I were made of air and would go floating off some place. In spite of what I had said to him at the end it was Lula and the union I kept thinking about, and I knew I had cut every tie that bound me to the world I had left.

* * *

When I came in sight of the apartment house I began to walk faster, then I made myself slow down and fought off the hope I could not help feeling within me. Yet my heart almost stopped beating when I entered the apartment and heard somebody moving about in the bedroom. I paused a moment and pulled myself together, especially so there would be no smile on my face or anything, for I did not want to appear too eager Then, as casually as I could, I went in there.

Steamer trunks, shirts and suits of clothes were piled

all over the bed and a strange woman, in a maid's uniform, was standing at the chest of drawers, taking everything out. When she saw me she stopped what she was doing and looked very frightened. It was a moment or two before I could speak. "What are you doing here?"

"We come for Mr. Harris's things."

She spoke with a German accent and I was slow in understanding her, but the "we" caught my ear. "What do you mean, 'we'? Who else is here with you?"

"Mrs. Harris, Miss."

"Where?"

"I don't know, Miss. She come. She is here."

I went in the living room and she was already coming toward me, her arms outstretched. "My dear! I called you. I called you three times. But then the dear boy had to have something to wear and I—"

"You borrowed his key and sneaked in when you knew I wasn't here. Because of course you called—three times."

When I said that she somehow changed her mind about putting her arms around me but she kept the smile on her face, turned to a chair and started to sit down, at the same time taking charge of me in a very patronizing way. "Sit down, Carrie. I can see we have things to tell each other."

I picked up the chair from behind her and pushed it back against the wall so she almost fell down, so at any rate the grand manner had a crimp put in it. "I do the inviting around here. Suppose we stand up."

"Very well, my dear."

"So you've finally taken Grant away from me?"

"Not I—oh, not I. I don't think he told you, he's so kind he couldn't bear to hurt anybody but he still loves Muriel, Carrie."

"He never loved Muriel."

"Ah, if you only knew—"

"I know all I want to know or need to know. After a month of insulting me, of scheming against me, of torturing Grant in every way that you know, you've finally suc-

ceeded in making two people unhappy and breaking up their marriage, in doing everything you started out to do You've come here for his clothes and personal effects, and all I have to say to you is, take them and get out."

I stepped very close to her as I said that and I trembled with a desire to slap her face. If I hadn't already slapped Lula's face I would have done it, but somehow I couldn't just go around slapping faces. She started to say something, then didn't, and stood there with the smile still hanging on her face, but it was beginning to be weak and frightened. I pointed to the bedroom "Get in there with your maid. Make it as quick as you can and when you're ready to go you may give me the key that you let yourself in with. I'll not let you leave here until I have it."

"Yes—certainly."

* * *

She called the elevator boys to help her take the trunks down and when she had gone it was my turn to storm around there and act like a lunatic all by myself. I broke out into a perfect hysteria of rage and kept weeping and moaning because I hadn't slapped her face. If I had I think my whole future life would have been different, because it would have satisfied me and from then on I would have had no impulse to do anything against her. But I hadn't slapped her face, and all I could feel was a rising surge of fury against her. She was the only person in my life I had ever hated, and from then I could feel nothing but an obsession to get back at her.

* * *

Around three or four o'clock came the reaction. I began to cry and lay down on the sofa, trying to stop. When I did I remembered that I not only hadn't had any sleep but I hadn't had anything to eat either. I went in and bathed my eyes, then went out. At some lunch room down on Second Avenue I had a sandwich and a glass of milk.

When I came out on the street again I remember standing there looking around, trying to decide which was uptown and which was downtown. I have no recollection of going back to the apartment or of what I did when I got there. The next thing I knew it was night and I was lying on the bed, still dressed and feeling as though I had been in some kind of stupor. But what woke me was that I was cold. I got up, took off my clothes, put on my pajamas and went back to bed again, under the covers this time. Grant flitted through my mind but I didn't cry or feel badly that he wasn't there. I seemed incapable of feeling *anything*, and next thing I knew it was morning.

After a night's rest, however, I was capable of feeling, for a quick stab of pain shot through me when I realized I was alone. I got up at once, so I could be doing something in order not to think. I took a bath, slipped into a suit of house pajamas I had bought, and made myself breakfast. I had cereal, milk, coffee, toast and an omelet, taking time to beat the omelet thoroughly so it tasted good and I could eat every bit of it. When I was through I washed everything up clean and put it back exactly where it had been when I came there. I dressed carefully, went out and walked over to Bloomingdale's, where I bought a traveling bag which I brought back with me in a taxi. It was what they call airplane luggage, almost as big as a trunk, but it was made out of nice leather and had hangers in it, which I especially wanted for the new things I had bought after I got married. I had the elevator boy bring it up for me and as soon as I was in the apartment with it I changed into the house pajamas again and packed. I was careful to put in everything that was mine and to take nothing that wasn't mine. When I had finished I put the house pajamas on top and changed into the green dress I had bought before I met Grant, for I didn't want to wear anything associated with my marriage. I closed the new bag and also the one I had brought when I came.

That night I called Mr. Holden. I met him for dinner, then brought him to the apartment and we talked. He accepted what I had told him and made no personal advances at all. He spoke at length about his plans for organizing workers in the West and said it would be imperative for him to leave for the Coast within two weeks. I tried to imagine myself going with him, tried to believe I would be lonely after he left. I couldn't think of anything but Grant and the bitterness I felt against the woman who had taken him away from me.

* * *

Next day I went down into the financial district to look around with a view to starting a business for myself. From what I knew of the eating habits of people in Wall Street, as a result of my work at Karb's, I felt there would be an opportunity for a place run like a little club, where men could come in, see their friends, be served quickly and get back to their offices without consuming too much time. As a matter of fact, there are a number of luncheon clubs on lower Broadway, but most of them are both expensive and exclusive. What I had in mind was a place to be located right in one of the big office buildings so that the customers could eat without even leaving the building. But of course it was all tied up with the question of rent and the kind of bargain I could make.

I saw the superintendent of several large buildings and while most of them were full up, one place had a space and they were willing to make concessions, so that things looked very favorable. The next two or three days I put in talking to the restaurant supply houses and they were very attentive to me and willing to extend credit, so that even with my limited capital it looked as though I would be able to make a start. And yet I didn't seem able to make up my mind about anything and would come home every night and sit there and look at my

packed luggage and think about Grant. Then Mr. Holden would call and we would go to dinner, and when I would come home again and go to bed and it would be all gray and depressing and I didn't seem to take any interest in whether I could start a business or not.

* * *

One day I came home earlier than usual and found a note from Mr. Hunt saying he had called and giving his number, with the request that I call him. My heart began beating fast, and I called.

"Carrie, I've got to see you."

"What about?"

"Money."

It was a disappointment, but after a moment I said: "I'm amply provided for, thank you."

"I said I had to see you and all I want to know is, are you home or aren't you?"

". . . Yes."

"I'm coming down."

So in a half hour he was there. Before he arrived I phoned the desk that he was to be sent up and then I hurriedly got out Scotch and a seltzer siphon and opened the Scotch. He took the drink I made for him, crossed his legs and remarked: "God, but Granny's a fool."

"I thought we had agreed that Grant was the victim of something he couldn't very well help."

"I hate victims of things they can't very well help. I hate victims. Even a Chinese war victim has a very stupid look, to my eyes. Did you ever notice those people? They don't really look bright."

"So?"

"Granny's a victim. To hell with them all."

"The Chinese children don't look so stupid. They look sweet."

"Granny's no child."

"He is to me."

"To me he's a fool just a plain fatheaded sap. And if you take that to mean that I think you're all right O.K., that's what I do think. However, that's not what I came here for."

I waited and he kept rubbing the moisture on his glass with his thumb, which seemed to be a habit of his, and then he said: "I've been selected to buy you off."

". . . I don't know what you mean."

"I mean, find out how much you'll take to get a divorce and forget the whole unfortunate incident. I believe they stipulate a trip to Reno, so the thing can be washed up quickly and quietly."

". . . Well, I had thought of you as a friend."

"That's exactly the way I think of myself."

"This doesn't sound much like it."

"No, it doesn't. I'm surprised how unpleasant it sounds. It has a regular Judas ring to it. Nevertheless, it's supposed to be friendly on my part, at least But I'm only the fiscal agent."

"If you don't mind, I don't want to hear any more."

"Carrie."

"Yes, Mr. Hunt?"

"Suppose you call me Bernie."

"All right, Bernie, but I warn you if I hear any more about this I'm liable to pick up an ice cube and hit you in the eye with it. I've taken quite a few things in the last few days and this could be the straw that broke the camel's back. Why did you come up here with any such proposal as this? If you think I'm 'all right' does that mean I could be bought off just like some floosie?"

He came over and half knelt beside me and touched my hand. "Now we're getting somewhere. Now comes the friendly part. What did I tell you the last time we talked about this?"

"You mean at your home that day?"

"Yes."

". . . You told me I was sunk."

He was so straightforward there was no use pretending I didn't remember. He must have seen that it upset me, for he waited a moment before he went on. Then he said, very quietly: "That's right. That's what I told you. Carrie, you're still sunk. It's all over. Now it's simply a question of how much."

"It's simply a question of me being sick of the whole miserable mess, and I don't want to hear any more about it."

"Let's go into that. Why not?"

"That woman, for one thing."

"Go on."

"Do you think I'd give *her* the satisfaction of thinking she could—*buy me off?*"

"Listen: When I take money off a louse I figure she's still a louse but I've got the money."

I couldn't help laughing at this and he laughed too. "And believe me, when I say louse I don't mean butterfly. I've been her son-in law for five years and I never saw anything like her. But never mind that, let's get back to you. There's twenty-five thousand bucks in it for you if you'll get on the train for Reno in some kind of reasonable time and my advice is: take it."

"I can't."

"All right then, here comes the real Judas part, only I'm selling *them* out this time, not you. Things haven't been going as well with them as perhaps you think. You've heard of Uncle George, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Uncle George is the senior partner in the brokerage house of Harris, Hunt and Harris. I keep him out of the brokerage business pretty well, so that part's all right. But I can't keep him out of the Harris estate. He manages that, and he made mistakes. Do you want the details?"

"No."

"They were pretty serious. George got clever, just after we got in the war and for a while it was fine, but then

afterwards the Harris millions began to melt. That might be the reason Grant can't get the money he wants to dig up those Central American Indians. And it might be the reason that George was so enthusiastic when Mama decided that Grant ought to marry Muriel. That's all conjecture. I'm not admitted to the inner councils of the Harris estate, but this much I know: things aren't so good. Twenty five thousand dollars, if you take it now, is a good offer. It's about all they can pay. If you wait too long the offer may be withdrawn. They may not be in a position to pay *anything* . . . Carrie, *take it.*"

"I told you—I can't do it."

Twelve

The next day I dressed to go out and resume preparations for starting a business. But somehow, after I got my hat on, I didn't want to go out. I kept sitting there and all I could think of was. $25,000, $25,000, $25,000. It kept drumming through my head and I tried to get my mind off it but couldn't. I kept telling myself that at a time like this, when all that I really wanted was to come out of it with a clear conscience, I shouldn't let my interest in money cause me to do something which later I would be ashamed of. But I kept thinking about it and not only that, I kept calculating all the things I could do with it, for of course, with that much capital, I could start a business at once, and a much bigger business than I had had in mind when I had started my inquiries a few days before. And then I thought: Well, why *not* take it? Next thing I knew I had taken off my hat and was sitting there in the bedroom at the head of the bed looking at the

telephone. Under it, with one corner sticking out, was Mr. Hunt's note with his number on it. I lifted the telephone. Then I clapped my hand on the contact bar at once. For it shot through my mind: If I call him, then it's going to be $25,000. If I don't call him, then he may call me.

I put on my hat again and went gaily out. I felt better than I had felt in a month. I walked down to the St. Regis, went into the King Cole Room and had a martini cocktail. Then I went into the dining room and had a fine lunch. It cost three dollars without the tip, and it was worth it. I walked over to the Music Hall, saw a picture. When I got back to the apartment there was a wire notice and when I called it was from Mr. Hunt, asking me to call him. This made me feel in the humor for a nice dinner, with pleasant talk about grand opera, and literature and the capitals of Europe. I called Mr. Holden.

* * *

Next morning I was awakened by the phone ringing. I was afraid to answer for fear it would be Mr. Hunt and that they had put him through without finding out whether I wanted to talk. So I just let it ring. Then I bathed and dressed quickly and made myself some breakfast. Two or three times the phone rang and I didn't answer, but I thought it advisable to stay in. It was a long wait, but shortly after lunch here came the ring on the buzzer and when I opened the door he was there. I had rubbed all the rouge off my face so I looked very white, and acted very sad. Also, I acted quite absent-minded, and waited at least five minutes before remembering to fix him a drink. He began practically where he had left off, telling me to take the money, that I would have to get a divorce eventually and that I was a fool to let this opportunity slip by to cash in on it for whatever I could. I listened in a very melancholy way, and then, as

he got well warmed up, I buried my head in a sofa pillow and began to weep, at any rate as well as I could, though I was afraid to let him see my face for fear there wouldn't be any tears in my eyes. But when I could feel them running down my cheeks I straightened up and let him put his arm around me and pat me and wipe them away with his handkerchief. Then I began to talk in a very desperate way about the six sleeping tablets I took last night so I didn't wake up until one o'clock this afternoon and how I was going to take more and how if they didn't work I was going to throw myself from the window, and then I wept very loud and said: "After all she's done to me—and she thinks she can get rid of me for twenty-five thousand bucks."

He made no reply to this but I could feel him sitting there beside me on the sofa and he was silent so long I decided to peep and see what was the matter with him. He was looking at me with one eye shut and the other eye open, in so comical a way that I had to burst out crying again to keep from laughing. He got up, stood in front of me for a moment, then kicked my foot. "Carrie, every time I see you I like you better . . . I'll borrow your bath for a moment."

He disappeared, then came back. "Funny thing, I couldn't find any sleeping tablets in that cabinet."

"I feel just terrible."

"In other words, they've got to up it?"

In reply to this I merely moaned, "Twenty-five thousand bucks!"

He drained his highball, picked up his hat, said, "I'll see what I can do," and walked out. I neglected to fasten the door after him, so it was most unfortunate when he popped back in again, to get his stick, and found me doing cartwheels in the middle of the floor. He came over to me, gave me a little kiss on one cheek, winked, and left.

* * *

Next day he was back, and I wept and bawled a great

deal louder, and I let him take a bottle of sleeping tablets away from me just as I was about to swallow them all. He argued with me a great deal, but came up to $30,000. But I still held out.

* * *

The next day I had a very bright idea, which was to sue Mrs Harris for $1,000,000, charging alienation of Grant's affections. I thought if I got a lawyer and actually did this it might be a pretty good weapon against her and that if she settled I could withdraw the suit afterwards. But that would mean more newspaper publicity, for which I felt nothing but horror. So when Mr. Hunt came I contented myself with talking about it. I howled that I had changed my mind about killing myself, that I only wanted justice and that I was going to air the whole thing in court and tell all about her designs on Muriel, as well as everything else I knew about her. And in addition to that, I was going to sell the signed story of my life to the newspapers which had made me offers. He argued with me just as solemnly as he had before, but the next day when he came back he was up to $40,000. It went on for two or three days after that and he roared at me just as though he was my bitter enemy, and I roared back in the same way, and all this I am sure was so he could go back to Mrs. Harris with a full account of what had been said. But when he got up to $50,000, and we were roaring louder than we ever had before, he suddenly put his arms around me, lifted the hair from over my ear with one finger and whispered: "Take it."

"Is it the most I can get?"

"If you get a lawyer you can blackjack a bigger settlement. But how much she pays and when she pays it and how much the lawyer takes, I wouldn't like to say. And remember, the lawyer gets his first. This is cash, and it's all yours -$50,000, clear of your expenses to Reno, court

costs, and whatever the lawyers charge for the divorce."

"I'll take it."

So then I made him a drink and I had a little one, and we laughed and he said unquestionably it was the best bargain I could have made, looking at it from what I would get out of it. From what he had let drop about the family finances I thought it was too, and anyway, I had said yes, so there was no use wondering any more.

* * *

It astonished me how quickly it was all arranged once the main bargain had been made. I met Mr. Hunt in a lawyer's office in the RKO Building and we went all over it. I was to get $25,000 cash, have all my expenses paid to Reno and back, as well as my hotel bill while I was there, and all costs of the divorce suit which I was to bring against Grant on the ground of desertion or whatever the lawyers in Reno should advise. Another $25,000 was to be placed in trust for me with the lawyers in Reno, and paid me as soon as the divorce was granted. Two or three days later I went there again to sign papers and as soon as this was over Mr. Hunt picked up Mrs. Harris's check for $25,000 and handed it to me. It startled me to see her handwriting on the check, very small and neat, and to learn that her first name was Agnes. It seemed too sweet a name for such a viper.

I deposited the check on my checking account, for I hadn't yet decided what I was going to do with the money. When I got home I tried to feel pleased that I was worth over $26,000 now, an amount I would have regarded as a fortune less than a year before, and that I would be worth more than $50,000 in another few weeks. But I couldn't seem to enjoy the realization as much as I had expected to. At first I told myself it was because the silly battle with Mr. Hunt was all over and the excitement had died down. But what I kept thinking about was that

neat little "Agnes Harris" at the bottom of that check, and I knew that what I had been afraid of had come to pass: I had done something I wished I hadn't done. Whether I had her $25,000 or not, the victory was hers, not mine, and I hated her all the more.

Two or three days after that Mr. Hunt took me to the plane, driving the car himself. Going over the Williamsburg bridge was when it swept over me that I was cutting all ties with Grant, so by the time the plane went down the field and then came wheeling up to the gate to take me away I was fighting back tears, and they were real ones this time, not the phony ones I had been shedding the last two or three weeks. He must have sensed the state I was in, for he kept talking very rapidly about the fine accommodations I would have aboard the plane, but at the same time giving my hand little quick squeezes. At last I could stand it no longer, and had to ask him what was really on my mind. "Did you -have you any messages for me?"

His face hardened and he sounded quite savage when he spoke. "I told you, Grant's a fool. No, I have no messages. I haven't seen him, as a matter of fact. He's not in town. He's up in the country, recuperating from all he's been through I hope you get that. From all *he*'s been through."

They opened the gate then and I started for the plane. He caught me in his arms, gave me a quick hug and a little kiss. "Listen, I'm a Harvard man too, but it didn't have any effect. Everything I've said to you about how much I think of you still stands. So when you get back I want to see you."

"Me, too."

He took my shoulders and jerked them back, then tilted my face up very high. "Chin up."

* * *

It seemed amazing to me that we reached Kansas City

by ten o'clock that night, for Kansas City had always seemed very far away and not at all a part of my life. And yet I was there. I had watched half the United States slip by under me, had flown over St. Louis, had seen the Mississippi River, like a dark snake twisting through the lights, had set my watch back an hour, and even in New York it was only eleven o'clock. I had a cup of coffee in the airport restaurant, got back on the plane again, fastened my seat belt and in another minute we were off.

I could have had a berth but had asked Mr. Hunt not to take one, as I wanted to look. About one o'clock the moon came up and around two or three o'clock we began flying over the Rocky Mountains. It was early November but even at that season of the year some of the peaks had snow on them, and it looked very white and still down there and terribly wild. Then it began to get light and I could see still better, and I got some idea of how big the United States really is. Then off to the left, and a little behind me, appeared a light in the sky. I thought it was some kind of plane beacon at first and then I thought it was a light on a plane I couldn't see. But finally I realized it was the morning star, and I felt sad and depressed again, for it was behind me.

* * *

It turned out that a reservation had already been made for me at the Riverside and I went up to look at my apartment. It was a pleasant suite with a bedroom, sitting room and bath. I suppose Mr. Hunt had seen to that, and done whatever had to be done to permit me to keep it the necessary six weeks. When I raised the question of price I found out the bill was to be sent to Hollowell & Hyde, the lawyers I had been referred to, so I never found out what it cost. However, it was very nice and I at once unpacked, hung up my things, had a

bath and changed my dress. Then I went down and had breakfast and looked up Mr. Hyde, who was located in an office building nearby. Walking over there I could not but admire the clean, fresh look that Reno had, with mountains in the distance and the Truckee River running through the center of the town within a few steps of the hotel. At least they call it the Truckee River, but it was not a river like the Hudson, or any river I had ever seen. It was nothing but a rapid stream you could throw a stone across, but the water was clear and green and boiled along in a picturesque way.

My talk with Mr. Hyde was very brief. He asked me a few questions, then said the simplest thing would be for me to charge cruelty, and he would go over the details with me when the time came. He warned me not to register at any hotels outside the state during this period when I would be establishing my residence in Nevada. However, he said it would be all right for me to take automobile trips into California, or wherever I wanted, provided I got back to Reno the same night. So within an hour I was back at the hotel with nothing to do but wait.

* * *

During my negotiations with Mr. Hunt I hadn't said a word to Mr. Holden about what I expected to do, for I was afraid if he found out I was leaving for Reno he would arrange to leave with me, and this I didn't want. I didn't even call him up to say goodbye. So now I sent him a telegram explaining why I had left, then went to bed and got some much-needed sleep. Whether it was the high altitude or the letdown from the strain I had been under I don't know, but I slept most of that day and the next and had my meals sent up from room service. So it seemed surprising that around four o'clock the next afternoon the phone rang and the desk said he was down-

stairs. I told them to have him wait, then dressed as quickly as I could and had him sent up.

He only had about two hours, as he was going to San Francisco, and he was rather different from what he had been any other time I had seen him. He was usually rather flowery in his talk and had a lot of jokes, but now he had very little to say and it was quite brief and to the point. I was to stay here and get my divorce. Where he would be during that time he didn't know, as it was a waterfront strike he was to take charge of and he would be constantly on the move from Seattle clear down to Los Angeles and possibly even San Diego. But whenever he could he would slip over to see me and now and then we would have an evening together. As soon as I was free we would be married and then leave for wherever his work called. I made no objection to any of this, and yet it all seemed remote and not at all in line with my life.

* * *

Within two or three days after he had left I discovered that passing six weeks in Reno was going to be very tiresome. I met several people around the hotel, most of them ladies who were also waiting for their divorces. They apparently slept all day and toured the clubs all night and they invited me to come with them, so one night I made the rounds. There were many places in town and I think we went to them all, but they didn't interest me much as I never gamble and I didn't care to go any more. I decided I wanted a car, for there were many places I wanted to see in the vicinity and particularly I wanted to visit Goldfield, on account of the stories Pa Selden had told me about the great days of 1908 when it was booming and he was there. The discovery that I could have a car and still make hardly any impression on my bank account was probably my first realization of how much $25,000 really was.

After looking around I decided on a small used coupe which I could get for $900. I didn't regard it as an extravagance, for when I left Reno I could resell it for almost what I paid for it, so I would not be out much. It was light blue, with very smart lines, and I thought I looked very well in it. So they gave me driving lessons and by the end of a day I could do everything very confidently, even back. So by the end of two or three days I was ready for my trip to Goldfield.

It was a very long drive, nearly two hundred miles, and I have to confess that a large part of the way I was quite frightened. The road was built over a flat plain covered with gray alkali dust, with only a few tufts of dry grass showing, and this plain extended for miles and miles. Only once in awhile would I meet a car, and except for them and an occasional rabbit that would hop across the road I couldn't see a living thing or any sign of human habitation. It was my first close contact with desert land and it was like rattling madly through space that didn't mean anything.

I had started around eight o'clock in the morning. I gassed and had lunch at a little town about halfway down and arrived at Goldfield around supper time. It didn't look at all as Pa Selden had described it or like the pictures he had shown me. For it is practically a ghost town now, and I discovered that some years ago they had had a fire which wiped out most of it, with the ruins still there. But the hotel was the same, a big brick building five or six stories high, with a completely deserted lobby full of the leather furniture and oil paintings that were fashionable thirty years ago. The proprietor came forward to meet me and I said: "Can you let me have a room?"

"Lady," he said, with a very sad smile, "I can let you have a dozen?"

It was all very sad and yet somehow romantic and affected me the way the Welsh music did the first night

I met Mr. Holden. At dinner the proprietor stopped by my table to ask if everything was all right, and when he found what I had come for he called several men who were in the bar and they came and took off their hats in a very elegant way and sat down at the table with me. I offered them something to drink, and they accepted with the most comical little speeches. They were all men of advanced middle age and they wore the big hats you see in the West, and looked exactly like the illustrations in Western stories. It turned out they were old timers who had been in Goldfield during its great days, and one of them said he remembered Pa Selden, but I don't believe he did at all. Because they constantly told tall stories to kid me and make my eyes pop open, and yet with the most perfect manners. But they all believed that some day Goldfield would come back, and I think it was this that made it all seem so romantic and so pathetic.

But next morning two or three of them were on hand to guide me around, and ugly as the old gold workings were, I found them completely fascinating. They showed me everything from the big piles of ore, which had turned green with the passage of years, to a new mine that had recently been opened up where they said $750,000 had been spent on equipment with not an ounce of pay dirt taken out yet. Then they took me to an assay office which was a rough shack on a back street, where a man poked his head out and acted very mysteriously while we waited outside for him to let us in. They explained that assaying is a very secret work. But pretty soon we went inside and the assayer talked to me and I thrilled all over when he showed me what he called a "button," which remained in his crucible after he had made his tests, and I realized I was handling a little lump of pure gold and that this was the first step in the production of money.

Part IV

A MINK COAT

Thirteen

I left next morning and beyond Tonopah I noticed something in the road ahead of me. The desert air was so clear that things were visible for miles before you actually got to them, and so I drove some little time before I was sure it was a man, and some little time after that before I could see a car beside the road down on the desert floor. He stood up when I approached and motioned me to stop. This was something I would have been afraid to do anywhere near civilization, but out there in the desert everything seemed different and I felt I had to. He was a small, nervous-looking man of about fifty and wore gray flannels, a sports coat and felt hat, all very rough and yet very good quality. He lifted his hat and seemed very annoyed. "I'll borrow your shovel, if you don't mind."

"Shovel?"

"They took mine out when they washed the car yesterday and forgot to put it back, damn them."

"But I have no shovel."

He looked at me then for the first time, and his eye was very sharp. "You have no shovel? Didn't they tell you about that?"

"Nobody said anything to me about a shovel."

"Never start across this desert without a shovel, a tow-

line and a jar of water. All right, if you have no shovel we'll have to hook on the towline."

I got out then and saw what had happened. He had pulled out for a passing car and the whole shoulder had given way, dumping him out on the desert floor, where his wheels were buried up to the axles in the alkali dust. What he wanted the shovel for was to dig them out and probably sprinkle enough gravel in front of them to enable him to get back on the road. He wasted no time in explanations, however, but at once got the towline out of his car, made it fast to his front axle and, as soon as I had pulled up a few feet, to my rear axle. Then he got in his car, took the wheel and told me to pull up until the towline was tight. This I did. When my car stalled I started it again and he yelled: "All right, give her the gun."

I gave her the gun but I didn't move. Then I became aware of a smell of burning rubber, and he yelled at me to stop. I then assumed I had been spinning my wheels without moving him. But when he came, jumped in my car and pushed me from behind the wheel I discovered it had been a little worse than that. The traction of my wheels had caused the road to slide again, and there I was, hanging over the edge and about to go down in the desert any second. Before he jumped into my car he had unfastened the towline from his own front axle, and now shot my car ahead just as the whole road gave way and spilled out onto the desert in another slide. When we were on safe ground he stopped, took out his handkerchief and mopped his brow. "Close shave."

"Yes, it certainly was."

"Wait a minute."

He got out, unfastened the towline from my rear axle, coiled it up and pitched it in the bottom of my car. "Well, you'll have to give me a ride in to Hawthorne—that's the nearest place I can get a tow car."

So I gave him a ride in to Hawthorne, which was about

ten miles, but I let him drive, which relieved my nervousness. As soon as he made sure the garage there would pull him out he thanked me and then asked: "Where do you live?"

"I'm staying in Reno."

"At the Riverside?"

"Yes."

"That's where I live. I'll see you there."

* * *

Next morning while I was eating breakfast he sat down at my table and began to talk without saying good morning or anything. I found out it was his custom to begin in the middle or perhaps where he left off yesterday, without any preliminaries at all, and while it was an unusual way to do, it was completely a part of him. He was in the same rough clothes, and lit a cigarette, then glanced at me sidewise. "I kept trying to place you yesterday—haven't I met you somewhere before? My name is Bolton. Charles Bolton."

"No, I think not."

"Then I've seen you somewhere. What's your name?"

"Carrie Harris."

"Oh oh yes, of course. The pictures in the papers. What happened, anyway? Did Agnes bust it up?"

"You *know* her?"

"For years."

". . . Do you know Grant?"

"She had three or four brats and I think one of them was a boy. I suppose I know him."

"Yes. As you put it, she busted it up."

"I thought she would when I read the first dispatches about it. She's no angel, Agnes isn't Is she still good-looking?"

"Yes."

"Something unhealthy about her, though. She's not quite—you know what I mean? normal."

"I found that out."

"Distinctly alarming, I would say."

"You live here?"

"Lung."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Nothing to be sorry about. So long as I stay out here where it's dry it doesn't bother me. White, unmarried, Episcopalian. What are you doing today?"

"Why—nothing."

"Let's go to Tahoe."

"I don't know why not."

"It's all closed up there now so it'll be pleasant to tramp around. We'll drop down to Truckee for lunch and then we'll come back. Do you have galoshes?"

"Do I need them?"

"Snow."

"Oh fine."

"You'd better wear something rough and warm."

So I hurriedly went down and bought myself a rough skirt and sweater, a beret, woolen stockings, a short reefer coat and stout shoes with galoshes, and about half-past ten we started out in his car. We drove to Truckee, which was only a few miles along the main road to the Coast, then drove up a side road for about a half hour until we came to Lake Tahoe, and there we parked and walked around. It was marvelous, with the water so clear you could see stones on the bottom, even where it was quite deep, and the fir trees and oaks had snow on them so they looked exactly like Christmas cards. But the mountain air made it quite fatiguing, so after an hour or so we got in the car again and drove back to Truckee, where we had lunch at a little roadside stand. I was so hungry I ate two tongue sandwiches and one made with chopped olive and egg, and had two glasses of milk.

Then he said: "I've lived in that hotel for ten years now and I'm a little over-familiar with the menu. Let's go over to Sacramento for dinner."

"All right."

So we took the afternoon driving to Sacramento, and it was one of the most beautiful trips I ever took in my life. We crossed the Sierra Nevada, where at Donner Summit the road is 8,000 feet up and away down below you is Donner Lake, which looks like a blue mirror reflecting the sky. All around us was snow, and I was almost sorry when we left it behind us and dropped down into the rolling country of California. We went marching in, tough clothes and all, to a little restaurant he was familiar with, and I had a lobster which was different from the kind I had eaten in the East, as it had no claws, only big legs with little nippers on the end. He said it was really a langouste, but I didn't care what it was, the tail was full of white tender meat and went wonderfully with mayonnaise. After that I had a steak.

* * *

We started back for Reno around nine o'clock, and on the mountain curves not much was being said. But then suddenly with that trick he had of beginning right in the middle, he said: "So you get the divorce—and then what?"

"Well – a man wants to marry me."

"And you?"

"I don't know. And I *won't* know until—"

I stopped, for it swept over me again what had been such an obsession with me in New York. He looked at me sharply and I went on, but my voice sounded hard and not at all humorous, as I intended. ". . . Until I get back at dear Agnes."

"Now tell me what happened."

I didn't want to tell him, but he kept asking little shrewd questions, and then it began coming out of me in short jerks—not all of what happened, at least on Grant's side, but enough to make sense. After I got a lot of it off my chest I sort of ran down, then added: "I wish there were some way I could snub that Agnes. Her face would be as red as—"

"Ah! Now I get it . . . So you hate her, is that it?"

"Wouldn't you, if she took your husband—"

"That's got nothing to do with it."

"Oh? Just nothing at all?"

"If that was all you'd hate him, not her. But you don't. You're still in love with him."

"Grant means nothing to me. It's all over—"

"I say you're in love with him. Besides, even if she hadn't taken him away from you, you'd hate her just the same, wouldn't you?"

"She's an unadmirable character."

"And she showed you up for—what did you say you were?"

". . . A waitress."

"That's what hurt."

"I'm not ashamed of what I was."

"Suppose, just to pass the time and make a little money, you took a job as waitress in one of our Reno restaurants and then suppose Agnes came in and sat down. What would you do?"

"Pour hot soup down her back."

"You would not. You'd go hide."

". . . I guess I would."

"I know you would."

He drove for awhile and then he said: "Well—I don't know how you're going to get back at her. So long as you feel this inferiority she has a bulge on you that no bawling out can ever change. That is, unless you really do enter High Society."

"I *hate* High Society. And how, by the way, could I ever enter it?"

"Oh, that wouldn't be hard. You have money. Not much, but enough. The rest of it's simple. You merely prostrate yourself on the ground and knock your head three times in front of the Great God Horse."

"The Great God—what did you say?"

"I said you have to worship horses. Silly horses, of course. Not circus horses, brewery horses, milk wagon horses, horses that do arithmetic, or any other horses that perform a useful function. Hunters, for example. Horses dedicated to chasing the fox, probably the most futile occupation ever seen. Jumpers. Ponies. Ladies' driving horses—in an age that travels by automobile. All sorts of horses, provided they're conspicuously and offensively silly. It's all covered in the literature of the subject. Aldous Huxley and Thorstein Veblen go into it thoroughly, but I do believe some of the shrewdest comment on it was written by Robert W. Chambers. The horse is a symbol. He's this century's pinch of incense on the altars of Caesar—and remember, it was not required that you love Caesar, or believe in his gods or like his friends. Incense was enough. So with High Society. Manners, culture, breeding—they don't mean anything. The horse does. Funny, isn't it, to see people spend millions to get in—on yachts, charities, music and champagne—when one $500 hunter would turn the trick? With $50,000 and a mare for the horse shows, Carrie, you're automatically in. Nobody can keep you out."

"I don't want to be in. I want to—"

"Spit in her eye?"

"Yes . . . I know one thing I can do. I can give her back her $50,000 and—"

"What?"

"Yes. That's it! Now I know what's been pent up in me, making me feel miserable and ashamed. I took that woman's money and—"

"Carrie! That won't make her face turn red. It'll only make her laugh!"

"Oh, don't worry! I won't do anything foolish!"

* * *

We went on a lot of trips after that, to Carson City and Fallon and Death Valley and all around, and we kept having the discussion. He seemed set on the idea that I had to become a social leader and kept calling himself Pygmalion, whatever he meant by that. But I was wholly indifferent to everything but some scheme for using the money I already had in order to get more money quick and pay back Mrs. Harris the money I had taken off her and perhaps in that way forget her. We took our trips mostly in the afternoon, as he wasn't fond of getting up early, so in the mornings I began dropping in at a brokerage house that was located in an office building down the street from the hotel. In my days of sitting around the apartment in New York I had already become somewhat acquainted with financial matters through studying Grant's books. I wanted to learn more, though at the time I had no exact idea of what I was going to do with my knowledge after I got it. But I asked a lot of questions and followed the ticker and the blackboard and kept reading the *Wall Street Journal,* which was on file there, until I began to have a pretty fair idea of how the whole thing worked. All during this time I could feel stirring in me ambitions much more daring than I had ever had before, and knew that my interest in money, even apart from Mrs. Harris, was becoming a most important factor in my life.

Fourteen

It was more than a month before I saw Mr. Holden, which didn't surprise me, as the papers were full of the water-front trouble on the Coast and I assumed he had been pretty busy. But one day I went to see the lawyers again and we went over the divorce case and then when I came back to the hotel Mr. Holden was waiting for me. We went up to my suite and again he was very preoccupied, and seemed to have large affairs on his mind. He began at once asking me questions about my divorce, and wanted to know how soon it would be disposed of. I said in two or three weeks.

"Good. That'll just work in with my plans. I'll wash this thing up out there, then stop by for you. As soon as your decree is granted we'll be married, and then—" and here he looked very confident and mysterious "and *then,* Carrie, you'll see something."

I didn't want to discuss marriage, so I quickly seized the chance to switch over to whatever it was he was talking about. "Yes? And what will I see?"

"Never mind. But it's ready. We've got what we've been waiting for."

"Which is?"

"A break on conditions. It's our market, not theirs. The wheels are going round once more and they've got to settle with labor. And if they don't, labor is going to force them. The war is over, and now we strike."

"When?"

"You'll see. Soon."

From then on things began to move fast and it seemed almost no time before my case was set for trial, so of course when he phoned me from Los Angeles one night I had to tell him when it would come up. So sure enough, the night before I was to appear in court he came again, marched into the hotel with his bags and took a room he had wired for. We had dinner in my suite, however, and he was exuberant and greatly excited. "It'll be the biggest thing in the history of the American labor movement, Carrie. No comic opera affair like what you had at Karb's. This is real."

"You talk a lot but don't tell me what it is."

"We're driving at whole industries."

". . . What industries?"

He hesitated, then said: "For the moment, we're keeping it secret, but you'll see. Big industries."

"That'll take quite a while, won't it?"

"Not too long, and this time we land on their button. They're wide open. And we've got the punch."

* * *

I was so excited I began talking about the trips I had taken around Reno, for I didn't trust myself to discuss his plans anymore. Around ten o'clock I remarked that I had a trying day ahead of me and that I ought to get some sleep. So he went, and I took good care that time to lock the door. Then I went into the bedroom, picked up the telephone and gave the operator Mr. Hunt's home number in New York. I didn't make it person-to-person, as that would be quite expensive, and as it was one o'clock in New York I was pretty sure he would be home. So when the call was put through it was Mrs. Hunt who answered, and I told her who I was and she was very polite but I could tell she was worried. He came to the phone, and as soon as I had answered his inquiries about

the divorce, I got down to business. "Is anybody listening, Bernie? Can you talk?"

"I'm alone on the library extension."

"Very well. If anybody asks you, I called to give you particulars on the divorce suit."

"Right."

"But this is what I really want. Tonight by air mail I'm sending you a check for ten thousand dollars."

"Thanks offering?"

"No. You buy and sell stocks, don't you?"

"I hope so."

"I want you to put that ten thousand to my credit in your brokerage house. Tomorrow, as soon as the divorce goes through, I'm leaving Reno for some place, I don't yet know where. But wherever it is, I'll call you and give you instructions as to what you're to do with the money. Tonight all I want to know is: Can I count on you to carry out my instructions exactly as I give them to you?"

"Now wait a minute, Carrie. Stocks are my business, but after all, I like you. I don't want you to lose your shirt—"

"That's *my* lookout."

"What *is* this, anyway?"

"I don't know yet. I'm not sure it's anything except a brainstorm. But it may mean a lot to me. I've *got* to have somebody in New York I can trust. Bernie, you'll do this much for me, won't you?"

He thought so long over this that I began to worry about my charges, but at last he said: "I don't like it. I don't like any of it. I can tell from the way you talk you're gambling your money on some kind of tip you expect to get, and there's a special room on the Street where they shear lambs like you. Still, it's your own affair and your own money. All right, send on the money. I'll take care of it."

"Thanks."

* * *

The next day in court I stammered through my recital of Grant's ungovernable temper, his threats to strike me, and all the other things I was required to tell, and they were all true, so I could swear to them with a perfectly clear conscience. And yet they had so little relation to the real story that it seemed as though I was taking part in a trial that concerned somebody else. Hardly anybody was there, for the Reno courts do not permit the newspapers to treat people as they do in New York, and it only took a short time anyhow. The decree was granted a few minutes after I left court, and then I went over with Mr. Hyde to his office to sign papers. He then turned over to me his own check for the remaining $25,000, shook hands with me, and that seemed to be all.

I walked around to the second-hand dealer's where I had left the car on my way to court. He offered me $750, which I didn't think was enough, considering how little I had driven it, but I was in no mood to argue, so I said all right and he gave me his check. I went over to the bank where I had started a local account and deposited both checks, the one for $25,000 and the one for $750. Then I started back for the hotel. When I came to the bridge over the river I stopped and stood looking down into the water. You are supposed to throw your wedding ring into it as soon as you have your divorce, but I had no wedding ring. What I was thinking about was: What am I going to do about Mr. Holden? I can't marry him, at any rate not now, and yet I have to go with him if I am going to succeed with the stock market operations I have in mind.

Fifteen

He was waiting for me in the lobby and came up with me to my suite. For the first time in two months he became personal, put his arms around me, took my hat off and ran his fingers through my hair. I sat down on a chair, not the sofa, but he sat down on the arm beside me and continued to lift my hair and let it fall back against my neck. "So. Now you're free."

"Yes."

"How do you prefer to be married?"

"I—don't quite know what you mean."

"I prefer the clerk of the license bureau, myself, but if you want a minister I've made a list of six—all different denominations."

". . . Do you mind sitting over there? I have something to say to you."

He looked a little hurt but in a moment crossed over to another chair and sat down. I wanted to be friendly, but I am afraid I sounded very curt and businesslike when I spoke. "I can't marry you today."

". . . I had planned on it, Carrie."

"I know. So had I. Anyway, I had taken it for granted. But I'm not ready yet. I'm not readjusted. I want time to think and to know you a little better—under circumstances when I'm not all mixed up inside."

It was all false and phony, and the halting way I said it gave it a sound of sincerity that made me ashamed of it all the more. He looked at me a long time, and then he burst out: "Damn it, Carrie, why do you have to feel this way? I've been counting on you! I have a devil's own

time ahead of me, and I've been looking forward to having you with me! I—"

"You may. If you want me."

"Ah!"

"No—don't jump to conclusions. I don't quite mean *that*—or at any rate what I think you have in mind. Off and on, ever since I've known you, you've tried to persuade me to become active in union work, and even offered me positions if you want me with you couldn't I be your secretary? Won't you need one?"

He was over beside me before I even finished, kissing me, with tears starting out of his eyes. "Would you do that, Carrie? I'll *have* to have one. And if I have you - *I know* I'll win! With that bright little head you have on your shoulders—"

"But mind you, I mean *secretary*. I don't mean—something else."

"If you're with me, do I care what you mean?"

"I'm going to have my own suite, wherever we go, and pay for it—"

"Stop talking, Carrie. I'm too happy to argue."

"But I'm not through yet."

"I am. I know all I want to know."

"If I'm to be your secretary that means I'm a full-fledged unionist—or whatever you call it—"

"Of course you are. You're still a member in good standing of the culinary workers' union—"

"—And I have to know more about what I'm expected to do."

"The little head again. No wonder I love you, Carrie."

"What is this project, anyway?"

"I told you. We're hitting the big industries. The ones that unions so far have been afraid—or unable—really to tackle."

"Which industries?"

"Now that you're my secretary I can tell you. Automobiles. Steel. Rubber. The mass-production industries

that employ thousands—hundreds of thousands. They're the future of the labor movement."

"And where do *we* go, you and I?"

"The 'we' sounds sweet, Carrie. First to Detroit."

"Oh—the automobile industry?"

"Yes. And guess which plant we tackle first"

"I haven't any idea."

"The toughest of them all I saw to that For the moral effect. We play one against the other, but first we move in on Geerlock."

My heart was pounding so that I hardly knew what I was saying when I asked if I could be alone while I packed. However, he noticed nothing and told me to take my time, as we wouldn't leave until five o'clock. He didn't care to fly the northern airlanes at this time of year so we were going by train, and he was in very high spirits when he left me to arrange both compartments. As soon as I had locked the door I darted for the phone and called Mr. Hunt at his office. The call went through in just a few minutes but it seemed a year.

"Bernie?"

"Yes, Carrie?"

"Now I've found out what I didn't know last night. As soon as you get my check I want you to sell me short on Geerlock common."

"Geerlock! Carrie, you're crazy! The stock's a buy! It's been zooming since the spring They're snowed under with orders and—"

"Bernie! Please! I know what I'm doing! And you said you'd do what I—"

"But this is lunacy! You ought to be examined!"

"All right, I'll *get* examined. But will you -"

"I'll do anything you say, but it makes me sick."

"How much margin will you require?"

"On Geerlock? It's now selling at 110 ten points."

"Then my $10,000 will cover me on 1,000 shares -"

"For a couple of weeks, until you're wiped out."

"And how long will it take you to get rid of that amount of stock? I mean, under the SEC rule?"

"The rule is, that if we sell short we can only sell at a price higher than the last previous sale of that stock. But that part's easy. In this market it's no trick to sell short—and go broke. You'll be wiped out so fast—"

"I asked you how long it would take."

"A day, no longer."

"All right, then. As soon as my check arrives, sell."

"I'll sell, but I'm turning green."

"Take some bicarbonate."

* * *

I sent for my long distance phone bills, for I didn't want them paid by Mr. Hyde. I had just sent the boy down with the money when there came a rap on the door. I opened, and it was Mr. Bolton. "Just dropped in to say goodbye. How do you feel?"

"Terrible."

"What? You should be gay -think of it, shackles have been struck off your wrists! What's the matter, Carrie?"

"I've just double-crossed a man."

"The candidate for your hand?"

"Yes."

"I knew you'd never marry *that* guy."

"It's a little worse than that. I'm cold-bloodedly using him to further my schemes."

"What schemes?"

"Money."

"You're certainly a mercenary little rat."

"And he's decent and loves me. I feel like hell."

He took both my hands in his, then dropped them and turned away quickly, for he hated to betray that he liked anybody or was anything except a crusty bachelor. But for a moment or two, while he talked, his voice was very soft and he wasn't a crusty bachelor at all. "Carrie, if you really *were* a mercenary little rat and were doing

what you say you re doing you'd bore me and I wouldn't waste five minutes on you."

"Oh, I'm doing it, all right."

"You're doing it, but not for the reasons you think. You can deny it all you please, but you're really a young woman in love. You're determined to have that Grant back and you don't care how you do it. I guess you're right. You'll have to lick Agnes before you can do anything else, and all I can say is all's fair in love, and more power to you. If a labor leader has to be double-crossed, then to hell with him. Cross him and forget him. Look at me now, Carrie."

". . . I'm looking."

"Get that man."

"Then you don't—despise me?"

"I just love you—for your cold-blooded little soul and something in your heart that isn't cold . . . Get that slug and make a man out of him. Promise me?"

". . . I'll try."

"Atta girl."

He took my hand and gave me a kind, warm smile and I felt a great deal better.

* * *

We arrived in Detroit Christmas afternoon and at once went to a small hotel out near the factory. It wasn't much of a place and this surprised me, as previously Mr. Holden had always lived in a very elegant way. But he explained that it would be his headquarters for some time and that it was important that the people he would see feel comfortable there and not self-conscious about coming in, as they might if he went to one of the more fashionable hotels downtown. He gave me permission to go to a better place if I wished, but I decided to stay here. I didn't take a suite. I took a single room with bath, and my reason was that I knew most hotels had rules

against their women guests entertaining visitors in a bedroom, and this would be my excuse for not letting Mr. Holden or anybody come up there. I registered as C. Selden, hoping the newspapers would not identify me from that, and thank heaven they didn't.

My room was high up, but he took a suite on the second floor so his visitors could reach it merely by walking up one flight of stairs. I thought at first this was to make it convenient for them, but I soon found out it was also for secrecy. For they merely drifted into the hotel without having to announce themselves at the desk or attract the attention of elevator boys, and fifty or sixty a day would be in and out without any fuss. My salary was $40 a week. He offered me $60 but I told him $40 was all I would take. I would really have preferred to work for nothing, considering all the circumstances, but as this would have looked very peculiar I accepted $40 and paid my own bills.

I conscientiously made myself as useful as I could. I handled all phone calls, of which there were hundreds a day, did all sorts of small errands, kept the callers entertained while he was conferring with two or three of them in the inside room of the suite, kept a record of his expenditures. These were startlingly large. They included the pay of a large number of organizers who were working with him, the expenses of these men, the rent of halls whenever he felt it necessary to hold a large meeting, hiring of automobiles and all sorts of things.

In less than a week I could feel we were embarked on something on a very large scale that was going to mean a fight to the death. All these men who kept coming in and out, "key men," as Mr. Holden called them, from the positions they occupied in the factory, were very grim and terribly in earnest. They had little to say when they were brought in by the organizers and waited their turn to see Mr. Holden, but there was no mistaking the frame of mind they were in. They meant business, and it was

very different from the noisy pep meeting we had in Reliance Hall that night when the Karb waitresses got ready to strike.

And yet, try as I would to take some interest in it, since I realized it was important and would soon concern everybody, I remained throughout wholly indifferent to it. All I could think of was the desperate gamble I had undertaken on how it would all turn out. I was on the long distance phone every night talking to Mr. Hunt, and could hardly wait to get the afternoon papers to see what Geerlock common had done in the course of the day. For the first week things went very badly with me. Mr. Hunt made the short sales the day before Christmas while I was on the train at 111, 111⅛ and 111½ in lots of 300, 300 and 500, and then the stock climbed ½ or ¾ a point a day until it was selling for 113. He was frantic. He told me I was half wiped out already and pleaded with me to let him cover before I lost my whole $10,000. My hands would feel like ice every time I thought of it, but I made myself hold on and send him $5,000 more margin. A day or two before New Year's one of our organizers was beaten up by company guards and ejected from the plant, and nine men were fired because they had been seen talking with him. Mr. Holden at once wired the National Labor Relations Board, then jumped in a taxicab, went downtown and gave the story to the newspapers, with a copy of his telegram. The day after that, the item appeared in the papers. That was the first general knowledge, I think, that things were brewing in the Geerlock factory. The day after that, while the market as a whole moved up, Geerlock had a little dash after it, meaning "no change." Once more I felt a throb inside of me, for I felt it was the news of union activity that had caused my stock to sag below the others.

Next day there were more beatings at the factory, and then a representative of the National Board arrived and the day after that there was a long interview in the papers

with Mr. Beauvais, the president of the company, who said the union was infested with Communists and charged the National Board with trying to run his company, and then went on to say he would fight to the last ditch. "And we'll knock him into it," said Mr. Holden, when he finished reading the paper. "He weighs 250 pounds, so he'll make a fine splash."

The day after that, although the market again moved upward, Geerlock went down a point to 112. When I went up to my room to change for dinner a message was there saying call an operator of a certain number in New York. I called and of course she put me right through to Mr. Hunt. He was quite excited. "Listen, you, what's going on out there anyway?"

"Who's looney now?"

"But, Carrie—baby needs shoes!"

". . . It might go down more yet."

"When?"

"Before it goes up. It might sag a little more the next few days and then drop. But if you lose your shirt don't blame me."

Next day, on another rising market, the stock dropped a half point to 111½.

* * *

The day after New Year's several big union officials arrived from Washington. Except for Mr. Holden they were the first men of their type I had ever seen and I began to understand why the labor movement is much more formidable than most people seem to realize. They were all men of fine presence, with beautiful manners, but that wasn't what struck me about them. Although one or two were only medium size, and some of them were well up in middle age, they all seemed to walk in that same springy way that Mr. Holden walked, and you knew instinctively that they were fighters. In this respect they were exactly like Mr. Holden, and this side of him I could never quite

forget, even in his most romantic moments. I don't mean that it repelled me. There was something thrilling about it and yet something a little frightening about it too.

They arrived just before noon and went into a conference with Mr. Holden to which I was not admitted. I had sandwiches and coffee sent up and when I went in to serve them they seemed to know who I was, for they joked with me in a very friendly way. Then men from the factory began to arrive and for an hour or more they were packed in the inside sitting-room so tight I wondered how they could breathe. Then, by threes and fours, they began to leave. Then, around four o'clock, Mr. Holden and the men from Washington all went out very quickly and I was left alone. I knew something was about to happen. I sent down for a paper but there was very little about Geerlock. I turned to the financial page. Geerlock, which had been sagging steadily the last few days, was down to 109. I had about a $2,000 profit. I wondered if I ought to call Mr. Hunt and tell him to cover.

* * *

About five o'clock I remembered the radio which Mr. Holden always had in his suite, as he was very fond of music. I turned it on. There was music, but then all of a sudden it stopped in the middle and an announcer very excitedly said a meeting was being held that night by Geerlock employees to take a strike vote and it was expected they would all be out by morning.

* * *

From then on things happened so fast I don't think I could remember all the details even if I tried. Whether it was the first big automobile strike I don't know, but it was the first that *I* had anything to do with, and Mr. Holden directed it with an audacity that took my breath away. Once the blow had been struck he completely abandoned his policy of secrecy and invented a succession of stunts

calculated to get him space in the newspapers. The day after the strike started he hired helicopters to drop food supplies to the pickets, on the pretense that the police had placed them in a state of siege. I protested against the cost and pointed out that police were permitting pickets' wives to visit them, or anybody else who had sensible business, and that they could bring food. He laughed and said the helicopters made a better show. Then another day he found a number of GI students who happened to be musicians, called for their cards to make sure they were members of the union, and had them go over and give a concert to serenade the pickets who by now had put up some barricades. Almost every day he thought of something new and the result was that most of the stories in the newspapers were about what the union was doing, with the company's end of it occupying almost no space at all.

Not that the company kept quiet by any means. Mr. Beauvais called on the governor to declare martial law, and to use troops, and I don't know what all, and in addition to that demanded that the police disperse the pickets with tear bombs, but they didn't. Then he began denouncing Mr. Holden by name and calling him a Communist and saying that such a strike was really sedition against the Government. All this seemed to entertain Mr. Holden hugely, for he would laugh loudly every time he read the paper, and comment on "the stupidity of Capital" in dealing with the public. "Who reads statements?" he wanted to know. "And who believes them? You can see a helicopter And you can listen to music. And it sounds friendly. Didn't Henry Ford bring a lot of bagpipers into this town once? I've a notion to put them on the payroll, if they have their kilts with them. . . . No, it was the King of England that had the bagpipers. Ford had fiddlers. I guess I'll stick to trombones."

Sixteen

The stock didn't drop when the strike started. It merely sagged another two points, down to 107, and hung there for more than a week. I now had a profit of about $4,000, and I was in an agony of wondering whether I shouldn't cover. But then one day Mr. Beauvais issued another appeal to the governor, saying if the strike went on two more weeks he would be unable to make deliveries on his new model. Mr. Holden became excited when he read this and again had a great deal to say about the stupidity of business executives. "Think of that! Playing right into our hands. Only a fool would make that admission."

The Beauvais appeal was in the morning papers. As soon as I saw it I pleaded business downtown, jumped in a taxi and dashed to a stock broker's office. It had one of the big electrical boards and the light was constantly winking on and off for Geerlock. The stock was sagging steadily until, by the time I got there, it was 103. I rushed back to the hotel, went to my room and called Mr. Hunt. As soon as he answered I said: "Cover."

"But, Carrie, the bottom's dropped out of it. Let it ride! You'll make—"

"Tomorrow the bottom may be in it again." Because by now I had learned that Mr. Holden moved fast when he started and for all I knew the strike might be settled that afternoon. "How long before closing time?"

"Two hours."

"All right. As long as it drops let it ride. At the least upturn, cover. And no matter what it does, cover today. Don't leave me short for tomorrow morning's market."

"Is that a hint for *my* benefit?"

"No. I don't know anything and nobody does. But I've made something and I don't want to lose it by hanging on too long."

It was after lunch when I got back to Mr. Holden. He was very pleased that he had been able to rent a new Geerlock, a display car. He went out to have his picture taken in it, surrounded by the GI band, so he could release it to the newspapers with a story telling what a fine car it was and how the company ought to settle so they could manufacture it. Shortly after he went out a telegram was delivered to me. It was from Mr. Hunt He had covered at 102 to 103. Clear of commissions and interest, I had a profit of nearly $8,000.

* * *

Nothing happened that day or for a week or two. The men continued to hold the shops, Mr. Holden continued to put on his stunts and Mr. Beauvais continued to give out statements. There were several clashes outside the factory gates. Men kept coming in and going out of the hotel and Mr. Holden began to show signs of the strain. The stock continued to sag until it was down near 100 and I kept kicking myself that I could have made more by doing what Mr. Hunt said, but I kept reminding myself of something I had read somewhere, that more money is lost in the stock market by hanging on for the last dollar of profit than in any other way. But then, almost before I knew it, I was in the market again, for Mr. Holden happened to mention one day that they were moving in on Trent, another factory in Detroit, and I repeated my operation, this time making $3,000. And then he mentioned casually what was going on in other places, particularly the steel mills, and next thing I knew I was juggling four or five stocks at the same time, making money on them but becoming more and more nervous and less and less watchful of the Geerlock situation, which was the main thing we were concerned with.

So I was caught napping one day when a call came in for him. He made a memorandum while he was talking, then handed it to me and began putting on his coat. The memorandum gave the number of a room in one of the downtown hotels. "That's where I can be reached—but *only* if it's important."

His face was set but he seemed exultant somehow. He started out, then came back to me and, as nobody was there, gave me a little kiss. Then he whispered: "I think Beauvais is going to settle."

Then he was gone, and I let ten or fifteen precious minutes slip by, stupidly thinking how glad I was that the thing was all over, when suddenly I woke up. How I ever got up to my room I don't know, but it seemed an eternity before I had the telephone in my hand and got the call put through and finally had Mr. Hunt on the line. "Bernie, how much of a credit have I with you now?"

"Hold the line, Carrie, I'll look it up."

I fairly screamed at him: "No! Don't look it up! Don't waste that much time! Bernie, are you listening?"

"And how."

"Buy Geerlock for me, Bernie! Start *now!* Buy on margin up to every dollar I have on deposit with you! Have you got it?"

"I'm calling our floor man now."

"Buy Geerlock! Every share you can get hold of for me!"

* * *

The joint statement over the names of Mr. Beauvais and Mr. Holden was given out at four-thirty. It called only for union recognition, all questions of wages and hours to be referred later to a board of arbitration. The men marched out at five o'clock, preceded by their band and met by their wives and families in a very joyous reunion. Mr. Holden returned around six in very high spirits and all ready to take me out to some fashionable

place for dinner. He wanted to dress and really celebrate. But the settlement had been arrived at after the New York market closed and until I knew what my stock was going to do I didn't trust myself with him or anybody else. I told him the reaction from the strain had given me a splitting headache and that I would have to go to my room. I went up there and called Mr. Hunt but he had left his office. Around six-thirty a telegram was delivered. I opened it and it was a long wire from Mr. Hunt, telling me where I stood. I had a credit of $31,000, which included the original $10,000 I had put up, the additional $5,000 margin I had sent, the $8,000 I had made on Geerlock, the $3,000 I had made on Trent and various amounts I had made on other deals, of course with commissions and other charges deducted. This afternoon for my account, on a ten-point margin, there had been bought for my account 3,100 shares of Geerlock common in lots of 300 to 500 shares, at prices ranging from 101 to 102½. It was easy to see that my buying had run the price up nearly two points while my order was being executed.

I had dinner sent up but could eat nothing. I changed into pajamas, went to bed and tried to sleep. By midnight I was up walking around the room. I made myself lie down again but was still awake when the sky began to grow light.

* * *

Next thing I knew the phone was ringing and it was the middle of the morning. "New York calling."

"Put them on."

It was Mr. Hunt and the moment he spoke my name I could hear the excitement in his voice. "Carrie!"

"Yes, Bernie?"

"Baby, you've cleaned up. The stock opened at 102, ran up to 105 in the first half-hour, it's still climbing—and what do I do now?"

"Let me think. Give me a minute to think."

I thought and thought and then came to the conclusion it was a market question entirely and that I had better leave it to him. "Bernie?"

"Yes?"

"I don't know how high it's going to go. Can't you watch it for me and then—"

"You bet I can, Carrie. I'll let it zoom and when it slacks a little I'll close you out."

"But today, Bernie. Don't wait."

"Trust me, Carrie."

I got up, went in the bedroom and ran the water into the tub. I had just got in when the phone rang again and I answered. I was all dripping with water and had only a towel around me, but it was Mr. Hunt back on the line. "I've closed you out, baby. It staggered a little and I didn't like the look of it. You can never tell how high they'll bounce on a rally like that. So I went after it while it was still good. You're out at 108 to 110, average about 109. I'll give you the exact figures by wire."

"Thanks. Many thanks."

"*And* thanks. I was on the bandwagon, baby. I cleaned up, hanging right onto your skirts."

"Oh. I'm glad of that."

"Some skirts."

I got back in the bathtub and tried to figure. As well as I could make out, I had made something more than $20,000 on the deal. Counting what I had made before, it left me over $40,000 for my stay in Detroit. When I had finished bathing I went to the phone and rang Mr. Holden. "If you feel like some lunch, now I think we'll celebrate."

"You bet we'll celebrate. I'll meet you in the lobby."

* * *

The rest of that winter was one mad jumble of trains, hotels, strikes, meetings and worry. On account of his

success with Geerlock Mr. Holden was made a sort of general supervisor and moved about from one place to another as he was needed. After we left Detroit he concentrated on steel mills and we went first to Chicago, then into Indiana and finally to Pittsburgh, where the plan was to move in on Penn-Duquesne, one of the large independents. I made about $10,000 during these hectic days but I was curtailing my operations more and more. For one thing, the nervous strain was becoming so great I wasn't sure I could stand it, and for another thing, some instinct told me I had ridden a great run of luck and was about due for a fall. I dreaded that. I had made enough money to pay back Mrs. Harris every cent I had taken from her, and still have enough to live on for years. Or I could even travel, something I had always secretly hoped I would be able to do, in order to broaden myself.

So I determined to return to New York. My decision was hastened, perhaps, by the increasing difficulty of my relations with Mr. Holden. Almost nightly now he was making love to me and insisting that we get married. Then, also, he was becoming more and more puzzled at my attitude, and hurt by it, for which I could hardly blame him, considering everything. But I wished above everything else to avoid a big farewell scene with him and so pretended that I wasn't saying goodbye at all. I merely said I had been called to New York to wind up some details of my financial settlement with the Harrises and told him I would call him by long distance every night. This, I am a little ashamed to say, I fully intended to do, for I had made a little $1,000 commitment against Penn-Duquesne, on the short side, I mean, and I wanted to keep track of things so I would know how to handle it. He suspected nothing. He rode with me to the airport, for by this time I went everywhere by plane, and was very affectionate and urged me to get back as soon as I could. "I've a hard nut to crack this time, Carrie. I need you."

"I'll call you—every night."
"I'll be standing by every night at twelve sharp."

* * *

I reached Newark at one o'clock. I took a taxi at once to the hotel where I had reserved a suite. Then I rushed down to my bank, which I hadn't visited in more than three months, and went over both my balances there, the checking and the savings. Most of my money was on deposit with Mr. Hunt, but I still had several thousand here from the original $25,000 I had deposited before I left New York. As soon as I had checked over my books with them I drew $5,000 cash and took a taxi over to Fifth Avenue. The rest of the afternoon I spent buying clothes, for I wanted to look quite smart when I made my appearance at Harris, Hunt and Harris the next morning. I looked up Miss Eubanks, the lady who had been so helpful to me before, and she outfitted me again.

When I told her what I wanted she at once advised black. This I agreed to, as I had never had a black dress, and I was quite excited to know how I would look in it. She picked out a model made of sheer wool and I loved it. It made me look slim, but it was very severe and I wanted something to relieve it a little. But when I mentioned this Miss Eubanks became quite upset and said the whole point of the dress would be lost if I added anything to it whatever. She then lectured me on the need for simplicity, which was something I always tried to remember but sometimes forgot. So I took it as it was, and she helped me pick hat, shoes and stockings to go with it, as well as a smart black handbag. Then we picked out two evening dresses, one light blue, the other cream white, and again they were completely simple and unadorned.

When we got through picking the shoes and stockings to go with these it was nearly five o'clock and then I got to the main thing that was on my mind. I wanted her to go with me to pick out a fur coat, and as I already spent

so much money with her store I thought they might let her off. So she spoke to the head of her department and he said all right and she called one of the leading furriers to make sure they would be open when we got there. So then we took a taxi and went down there. But next door to the furrier's was a perfume place, and before we proceeded to buy the coat I dashed in and bought some perfume I had always loved and had never been able to afford. It cost $25 for a little bottle, and I would have taken it if it had cost $50.

At the furrier's they brought us into a private room and paraded models in front of me. Finally I decided on a mink coat, so dark and so beautifully made that it looked like sable. Miss Eubanks advised the three-quarter length, as she said it was smarter and more becoming to me. It cost $2,500 and I paid cash and took it with me. I asked Miss Eubanks to come around to the hotel with me for dinner and when we got there the package from her store had been delivered and we spent the next two hours trying on my things and even after she had gone home that night, which was around ten o'clock, I tried them on all over again and finally stood in front of the long mirror in the bathroom door in my new black street dress, big black hat and beautiful mink coat for more than an hour. I hated to go to bed.

* * *

Harris, Hunt and Harris were in a gigantic office building on Broad Street, one of the places I had gone into at the time I was considering a restaurant business of my own downtown. They occupied one whole floor. I had not phoned Mr. Hunt I was coming, as I could not quite resist the temptation to burst in on him as a big surprise. But when I stepped out of the elevator and gave my name to the girl at the window she looked up quickly and reached for her telephone. I had barely sat down when a gentleman appeared who said he was Mr. Hunt's sec-

retary and invited me inside. "Mr. Hunt stepped out, Mrs. Harris, but he's in the building and I'll have him located at once."

He opened a door and began leading me through a very large room with bright lights and rows and rows of desks where people were busily working. A stir went over the place as soon as I appeared. Nobody stared but I could feel that I was an object of great curiosity and that they were all aware of me, from the girls, who started talking to each other with an elaborate appearance of casualness, to the men, who kept shooting little glances at me over papers they pretended to examine.

That is, all except one. Behind a desk at the far end of the room where I would have to pass him, sat Grant, and I could tell that he hadn't seen me or noticed any of the commotion I had caused. My heart stood still when I saw him and I almost turned around and ran out. However, I kept following the secretary, and then suddenly I wanted to cry. Because he looked so insignificant there, with a green shade over his eyes and a pipe in his mouth, writing something on a piece of paper. Most of the sunburn was gone and he looked sallow and seedy. It flashed through my mind what he had once said about being a slave, and I wished he would at least take off the green eyeshade, which depressed me most of all.

But I kept sailing bravely along, and then I remembered my perfume. As I passed his desk I opened my coat quickly so he would get a good whiff of it as I went by. He looked up and our eyes met. "Oh, hello!" I said, just as gaily as though nothing had ever happened between us at all. Then I zipped through a glass door marked "Mr. Hunt," and the secretary was bowing me into a big leather chair. But all I could think of was the amazed look on Grant's face, and I began fumbling in my handbag so I wouldn't show how much I wanted to cry.

* * *

The secretary went and in a moment there came a rap on the door. I tried to look casual and said, "Come in." Grant was standing there, the green shade still over his eyes, acting terribly nervous and not quite looking me in the eye. I struggled for control so I could act naturally, and yet it was a second or so before I heard myself say: "Well! How have you been?"

"Very well, thank you."

But he sounded shaky and queer. I held out my hand and he took it. "And how have you been?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"You're looking well."

"Thank you."

"And you're certainly a success."

"Oh, am I?"

"A Wall Street celebrity, I should say. The whole place has practically suspended activity trying to find out what you're going to do next."

"I didn't know I was that important."

"Oh, you're pretty important . . . You've become prominent in the labor movement, Bernie tells me."

"Oh—I keep in touch."

"I got interested in it myself once."

"Oh, yes. I seem to remember, now you speak of it."

"I guess I'm not cut out for large affairs, though. It never occurred to me it could be used as a basis for market speculation."

He sounded a little bitter as he said this, and I replied: "I'm afraid you disapprove of my career in the market."

"Oh, no. I'm merely learning things. What's your part in the movement?"

"I'm afraid I haven't any just at present. I was a sort of traveling secretary."

"Oh."

He licked his lips once or twice as though they were dry, and I knew he was dying to ask about Mr. Holden, but I volunteered nothing. There was a long uncomforta-

ble pause and then he said suddenly: "What name are you using now, Carrie?"

This caught me wholly by surprise. I had been half enjoying the foolish talk we had been carrying on but now the same icy feeling began to creep around my heart that I had had in the last days before he left me. ". . . Why –that's something I hadn't quite got around to. The court gave me permission to resume my maiden name, and traveling around that's what I use. But on my bank accounts and in my business transactions I'm still using yours. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I just wanted to know."

"Nothing was said about it in the agreement that was drawn up."

"No, I saw to that."

"If my use of your name bothers you—"

"Not at all. In fact, it's not on my account I raised the question. But mother–"

"Oh, 'mother' again!"

". . . I guess I shouldn't have brought it up."

"So after the way you treated me, after you let that woman wrap you around her finger like some kind of worm—"

"We don't have to go into that."

"Oh, yes, we do! After all that, all you can think of to say to me now is that you don't want me to use your name because that simpleton finds it a little inconvenient to have a second Mrs. Harris around to spoil her solitary eminence! Well, I'm *going* to use your name!"

"It's quite all right, Carrie."

"But for a reason you don't know anything about yet. *I don't know my own name!*"

"You—? What did you say?"

"That's something the newspapers didn't find out about me, with *all* their snooping around. I don't *know* my name! And while I was perfectly welcome to use my foster-parents' name, yours is the first name that was ever

legally mine. And I'm going to use it! The court didn't say I *had* to use my former name. It only said I could if I chose. I choose. I'm going to use your name. Not that I like it. But it'll do until I get another which, praise God, may not be long now."

This last slipped out on me, for I truly hadn't given Mr. Holden a thought all morning. But I was so bitter over the whole discussion that I couldn't help saying it. He wheeled around, his eyes blazing, caught my hand and tried to jerk me up so that I would be standing, facing him. "What do you mean by that?"

I sat where I was and slowly twisted my hand out of his grasp before I answered. "What I mean by it is none of your business. You left me, you let your mother pay me to get a divorce, and now I'm free. This was your choice, not mine. Isn't that true?"

I looked at him when I said this and his eyes dropped. He walked around the office two or three times, picking up things and putting them down, and then abruptly turned and walked out.

Seventeen

A minute or two after that Mr. Hunt breezed in, kissed me and was perfectly lovely, but the meeting with Grant had taken all the fun out of my nice surprise. I explained briefly the reason for my strained manner, and switched at once to what I had come there about. I told him I was ready to pay back Mrs. Harris what I had taken from her, shut him up when he began to protest, and said I wanted him to have her at my hotel promptly at eleven o'clock the next morning, to have the money with him in cash, and then I would wash my hands of everything called

Harris, and before many days were out even get rid of the name itself. When he saw I was not to be shaken in my decision he stopped arguing and got down to other matters he had to straighten out, chiefly concerning the large balance I was carrying with him and what he was to do with it.

However, we were interrupted by the entrance of the secretary, who told him Mrs. Jerome was waiting to see him, and he excused himself a minute. When he came back he was laughing. "Baby, are you a sensation! When that woman found out you were in here she just camped down, and a fat chance I can get rid of her until she shakes your money-clutching paw."

"I don't want to meet her."

"You *did* meet her, at my house."

"Oh—yes, I remember her. I can't see her! I'm not in the humor! I this thing has upset me and I don't want to see *anybody!*"

"Carrie! Just for a minute—then I'll ride you uptown in the car and we'll wind up our business at lunch. Listen! This woman means dough to me."

So he brought her in. She was a big fat woman with gray hair and I remembered her from Mrs. Hunt's cocktail party. She began gushing over me and inviting me to spend the weekend at her place on Long Island. I said I had made engagements for the week end. She became so insistent that, to get her out of there, Mr. Hunt said he wanted to show us his shop as he called it. I said I had to go, but he reminded me he was driving uptown and there was nothing I could do but tag along with them, though what there would be to see I couldn't for the life of me imagine. As he went out the glass door I looked toward Grant's desk but he was gone.

* * *

There was a big electrical board in the place but that was an old story to me now and I sat on the edge of a

desk while he explained it to her. It was a desk belonging to a "customer's man," as they call it in the brokerage offices. The board is a great big affair which occupies one whole wall and has all the stocks listed, with the numbers winking on and off in lights as the sales are made. Some distance out from the board are chairs where people sit and watch the quotations, but directly in front of it is the battery of customers' men, each with a separate desk on which are two telephones, one for incoming calls and the other direct to the floor of the Exchange. As the orders come in these men accept them, then phone them to the floor man at the Exchange, who executes them. There were four desks in front of this board and at three of them men were busy at their phones. However, the man on whose desk I was sitting had gone off somewhere. A secretary came up, looked around, then tucked a yellow slip into the blotting pad. I don't remember being curious about it and must have glanced at it mechanically. But I felt my mouth go hot from fury at what I saw.

It was a "sell" order a printed blank with spaces for name, date, stock, number of shares, etc. In lead pencil at the top was the name "Mrs. Harwood Harris," and the Harwood was underscored three times. That was evidently to keep Mrs. Harwood Harris separate from the other Mrs. Harris, who was myself. The order was for 1,000 shares of Penn-Duquesne, and off on the side in compliance with the SEC rule was written the word "Short."

Anybody could see that what Mr. Hunt had done was tip Mrs. Harris off to what I was doing in stocks, for it was only yesterday morning that I had phoned him from Pittsburgh to sell a small block of this stock for me. And while I was really a sort of friendly enemy with him, I couldn't help feeling that this was a pretty dirty trick. So when he drifted over for a minute while Mrs. Jerome was examining one of the tickers I pointed to the "sell" order and said: "I don't think that was very nice of you."

"Listen, baby, her affairs had got to a certain point. Do you know what I mean? Something had to be done."

"I would think you could have found some other way to do it."

"I'd been trying for a year to find other ways and there weren't any . . . I certainly hope you're riding a winner again. She's in deep. That's only one little hunk of it."

He went back to Mrs. Jerome. And then suddenly a perfectly fiendish idea entered my mind to get back at Mrs. Harris. If there were some way I could persuade Mr. Holden to leave Penn Duquesne alone instead of calling a strike the stock wouldn't go down. It would go up—and my lovely mother-in-law would be ruined.

Suddenly I became very sweet and interested in everything, particularly Mrs. Jerome. I joined her at the ticker and said: "I've been thinking over my engagements, Mrs. Jerome, and I believe I could fit you in. If the invitation is still open I'd love to spend the week-end with you." For I thought: If everything goes the way I hope, a week-end with Society is exactly the way I'll want to celebrate.

She was delighted, gave me directions for getting down to Great Neck, and said she would meet me at the train and that I was to bring "rough, outdoorsy" things. She went then, and Mr. Hunt took me around to his bank and introduced me. I signed the necessary cards and they started an account in my name with the credit I had with him. We then went to lunch at a little restaurant down near the Battery and then he drove me uptown. He kept laughing over my social eminence. "Carrie, I'm proud of you! Monday you'll be on the Society page. She *always* consents—graciously, of course, and only after the newspapers call *her*—to reveal her week-end activities. Are you a success!"

But all I could think of was that I had to get hold of Mr. Holden.

* * *

I didn't even wait to take off my mink coat and hang

it up before I called him at his hotel in Pittsburgh. The report came back that he was out. I left word that he was to call me and gave the hotel number. Then I sat there and waited. Then I sent down for some magazines, to get my mind off it, but when they came up I threw them aside and began walking around, for I still didn't know what I was going to say to him, even when he called Then after awhile I realized that I *did* know what I was going to say to him, and had known all along. I was going to say I was lonesome for him, and try to entice him away from Pittsburgh by practically promising myself to him. For I knew the labor situation very well by then, and I was pretty sure if he didn't conduct the Penn-Duquesne strike there was no other leader who would be able to. As soon as I admitted this to myself a struggle began inside of me. I kept telling myself I would be starting something I might be sorry for afterwards and that the ruination of Mrs. Harris, after all, was hardly a sufficient reason and certainly not a very creditable reason, for taking a step which might affect my whole life. It didn't do any good. She had become a mania with me now, and now that she was so nearly within my grasp there was nothing I would stop at to satisfy what I felt against her.

The phone rang and I fairly leaped for it. It was the Pittsburgh operator to tell me that on the call to a Mr. Evan Holden, Mr. Holden had not yet returned to his hotel but that they would keep after him. That went on all afternoon and part of the night. Then along toward midnight I realized it had been a couple of hours since the last report. I picked up the phone and put the call in again. I had hardly begun to march around when the phone rang and it was the Pittsburgh operator. "On that call to Mr. Evan Holden, Mr. Holden has checked out of the hotel without leaving any address where he can be reached."

* * *

It was nearly ten o'clock when I woke up the next morning. I hurriedly bathed and dressed, and then to save time I ordered my breakfast sent up. But just as it arrived the desk called to say Mr. Hunt was downstairs. I had the waiter wheel it in the bedroom and leave it there, so I would not have to ask Mr. Hunt to sit there and watch while I gulped down coffee and eggs. Besides, I suddenly didn't feel like eating anything.

He came in, shook hands, and at once opened a large briefcase which he carried with him and took out a long sealed envelope to which a receipt was attached with a rubber band. He held it out to me. "Here is the money—fifty one thousand dollar bills. Now Carrie, I want to ask you once more: Are you sure you want to do this? Fifty thousand dollars is a lot of money. Some day you may need it. You can still change your mind if you want to. She doesn't know why you've sent for her. I merely told her to be here and said it was important. I guess I deliberately misled her a little. I let her think you're meditating some kind of legal action—"

"That's impossible. The agreement took care of that."

"Of course, but the way is still clear for you to rant and rave a little and pretend that's what you wanted—and still say nothing about the money. If you think anything of my advice you'll keep it."

"I don't know what I want to do." Because after the chance I had seen yesterday to get back at her, merely handing the money back didn't seem any satisfaction at all. And the envelope, all stuffed full of money, looked so thick and lovely I hated the idea of giving it to her. And yet I had sent for her and had to have it out with her or go insane, and the money seemed the only possible excuse for what I had to say.

I slid the receipt out from under the rubber band. "Do I sign here?"

He handed me his fountain pen. I signed and handed him the pen and the receipt. Then I quickly pitched the envelope up on the mantelpiece.

"You'd better count it."

"I'll take your word for it." Because I knew if I ever felt that money between my fingers I couldn't bear to part with it.

He put the receipt in his briefcase and just then the phone rang. He looked at his watch. "That may be Grant. I meant to tell you. She insisted that he be here."

"That's all right."

The desk said Mr. Harris was in the lobby and I told them to send him up. He came in with a hunted, hangdog look that I hated. We all sat there for a few minutes looking at our watches until I couldn't stand it any longer and asked them if I could fix them something to drink. Mr. Hunt shook his head, Grant didn't even answer. Then he looked at me for the first time since he had been there and almost spit at me: "What's between mother and this man Holden, anyway?"

"Why—I don't know, I'm sure."

"I think you do. And what's between him and you, by the way, too?"

"That's none of your business."

"I'm warning you now that I've taken about all off that guy I'm going to take."

"Very well, but I wish you'd make up your mind what you have against him. Because your mother is one thing, I'm something else."

"Not necessarily."

At this moment Mr. Hunt said, "Children, children," and we became silent again. The significance of the threats about Mr. Holden did not dawn on me then, but in a minute or two I was to find out what lay back of them. The desk called promptly at eleven and said a Mrs. Harris was in the lobby, and I told them to send her up.

But when she knocked and I opened the door to let her in who should be with her but Mr. Holden.

* * *

I was so surprised that when she took me in her arms and kissed me I let her, although I had fully intended to refuse even to shake hands. He patted my arm, and apparently was not aware there was anything unusual going on. When I brought them in, though, and he saw Grant, he was on his guard at once. He spoke affably but I could see his quick glance shoot around at all of us. Grant nodded to him coldly, and then I introduced him to Mr. Hunt, who seemed as much surprised at his presence there as I was. Then we all sat down and he took out a cigarette and began tapping it on his finger. Then he looked at me and said: "Well I had no idea I was going to wind up here when Mrs. Harris called me this morning, Carrie."

"Oh, you're back at the Wakefield?"

"M'm. For a day or two."

"I didn't know that."

I was just saying things that meant nothing. I wanted to ask him how he could leave Penn-Duquesne, and what he was doing here, and what she had said to him, and a lot of other things, but I couldn't do it before all the others, and I couldn't quite make myself ask him to step into the bedroom. It was all going differently from the way I had planned, and I had some panicky instinct that she had got the jump on me, but there was nothing I could do but begin. I turned to her. "Mrs. Harris, I've asked you here to discuss a little matter of business."

"Yes, Carrie? I love to talk business."

Her voice was like honey, but her eyes had the old familiar glassy look, and I wanted to back down, to say never mind, that it was nothing important and I preferred not to mention it. But I knew I had to go on. "But

before we get to the business part there are one or two matters I want to take up with you "

"Why, certainly, Carrie. Speak freely. After all, you're among friends. . . . What matters?"

". . . How you broke up my marriage, for instance."

I sounded all muffled and frightened, and she laughed. "Now, Carrie, you're joking."

"No, I'm not joking."

My voice came back when I said that, and I ripped it out as though I meant it, and stood up facing her. And she came back the same way, shrill and loud, the way she always talked when she got angry. "That'll be enough of that, young woman. I've been expecting it, I know just what you're up to—"

"You don't know what I'm up to!"

"Yes, I do, and I warn you that anything of that kind that you attempt is going to have most unpleasant consequences." She stood up, then, and faced me, and the two of us were in the center of the room like a pair of fighting hens. Grant said something quickly, but she paid no attention to him, and went on, shaking her finger at me. "I'm all ready for you. I'm quite prepared to prove that you never had a marriage to break up, that you deceived and betrayed my son even on his wedding day and before. I've taken good care to bring your paramour with me—and we'll let *him* tell who broke up your marriage."

She turned dramatically to Mr. Holden, and I don't know what she thought he was going to say, but he just laughed. "Be your age, Agnes, if that's why you insisted I come here with you. I broke up no marriage. And I'm not her paramour—worse luck."

At this Grant jumped up, his fists clenching and unclenching. "That's a lie, Holden. You've been traveling around the country with her, stopping at the same hotels—"

Mr. Holden looked up then, with such a queer look on his face that Grant stopped. "Mr. Harris, I understand

your anger, but I don't respect it. Only two people can break up a marriage, the husband and the wife. I can speak for the wife, in this case. I tried with every ounce that was in me to get her to come with me, to leave you, because I loved her and I thought you were no good. I tried without avail. She didn't break up the marriage. That leaves you. Am I right?"

Grant tried to answer him and couldn't, and slumped down in his chair again, twice as hangdog-looking as he had been before. Mr. Holden then added, "I have never been her lover, in the hotels or any other place—though I've tried to be, I say to my credit. I don't care to hear any more out of you on this subject."

Grant began to shake and put his fingers in his ears even while Mr. Holden was talking, so it was embarrassing to look at him, but Mrs. Harris wasn't done yet. She ran over to Mr. Holden and screamed: "How about those stock deals? How about those stock deals?"

"What stock deals?"

"You can't deny it! The stock deals you and she have been putting over! Do you mean to say you made her all that money—*just to be nice to her?*"

"I've never bought a share of stock, and I don't think Carrie would know one from a hard boiled egg—"

"*What?* Why, Bernie handled the deals! He—"

"Oh, mother, shut up, shut up—let Carrie finish and let's get out of here, or I'll go mad!" Grant sounded as though he was in agony, but I only half heard what he said. I was watching Mr. Holden, who had turned around suddenly toward Mr. Hunt. He then turned slowly around to me, and by the look on his face I knew he realized that what she said was true, that I had been dealing in stocks, and that he knew why. Mrs. Harris kept on screaming, but he paid no attention to her. He went over to the window and stood looking out at the sky. Then he turned to me. "That's why you wanted to be my secretary, Carrie?"

". . . Yes."

I felt sick when I said it, and nobody spoke, and he kept looking at me. "That you could use for profit something that was meant for glory? That men fought for, and bled for, and—believed in?"

". . . Yes."

Mrs. Harris began to scream again. "She made thousands *thousands*," but he sat down again, and motioned her to be quiet. "No more, Agnes, if you don't mind. I had a flower in my heart when I came in here, and it's not there any more. . . . Give me a minute. I'll mourn my dead, and be off."

He sat staring ahead of him, and nobody said anything. Mr. Hunt came over and patted my cheeks with his handkerchief. Tears were pouring out of my eyes so I could hardly see.

* * *

Mr. Holden got up then, walked heavily over to the table, picked up his hat and went out. I took the handkerchief and hid my face in it. After a long time I felt Mr. Hunt tapping me on the shoulder. "Somebody's out there. Do you want me to go, or—?"

"I'll go."

I went out in the hall. Mr. Holden was standing there. He closed the door, walked over toward the elevators, and stood leaning against the wall. ". . . I couldn't leave you that way, Carrie."

I went over and took his hand. "No —not that way."

"Why did you do it, Carrie?"

"I—I had to pay her back. What I took from her. I—I just had to."

"Well I could have known it was something with a little spirit to it."

"I couldn't see that it hurt anyone—"

"It didn't. Not Labor, certainly . . . But there was no love in it. Or you would have told me."

I began to cry again at that, and he took me in his arms, and held me until I was quiet. I wanted to tell him it wasn't true, that there *was* love in it, but I couldn't. ". . . Goodbye, Carrie."

"Goodbye."

He pushed the button for the elevator, and we stood there waiting for the car. "I hope you're not involved with Penn Duquesne, Carrie. They've settled."

"They've—*what?*"

"I see you *are* involved. You'd better do something quick. They've settled—a few cents increase, and a union shop, given us which was all we hoped for. They, as well as some others. It'll be announced tomorrow. We were on it all day yesterday. I got your message, but I took the sleeper. I wanted to surprise you. And then—this frantic call from Agnes this morning. And now -this."

The car came, he got in, and sadly blew me a kiss. I went back, and I swear I wasn't thinking about revenge or anything. But as I came in the room, I heard Mrs. Harris say: "-From that alone you can tell what kind of char acter she is Well—a waitress, what can you expect?"

Penn-Duquesne shot through my mind, and I walked through to the bedroom, wondering if I could be horrible enough to ruin her, now that the opportunity was right in my hand. All I had to do was ask them to leave, and say nothing, and she would be wiped out when the stock shot up on the news Mr. Holden had just told me, and I knew from Mr. Hunt she was heavily involved. But just about that time I noticed my breakfast on the wagon, with the covers still on it, where the waiter had put it. And then, all of a sudden, I knew what I was going to do. I went back, sat down, and said brightly: "Now!"

"Yes, Carrie. We've had so many distractions."

Mrs. Harris was her old smiling self again, and I smiled right back and said: "Now, Agnes, you may serve my breakfast."

"I—*what!* And how dare you call me by my first name?"

"I call you by your first name as is customary, for now you're going to be my servant. For one breakfast only, but for that long you're going to be a waitress, as I was once, and I'm going to call you by your first name."

Grant got up and began helping her into her coat. "I don't see any need to prolong this any longer, Mother."

"No—this is simply absurd."

"It is my intention, Agnes, to give you a very handsome tip—fifty thousand dollars, as a matter of fact, the money you paid me to get my divorce from Grant. But for tips I expect service."

"My dear, I'm not accustomed to serving breakfasts for trifles like fifty thousand dollars."

I let her get clear to the door before I made my next remark, which was: "Then perhaps your commitment in Penn Duquesne may make you feel differently."

She stopped, turned pale and stared at me. But I continued to speak in a cool and casual way: "It's an excellent stock for speculation purposes, and I compliment you on your judgment in selecting it. The only trouble is, it's erratic. There's only one person in this room today who knows what that stock is going to do. I've taken the trouble to find out, solely for your benefit. I can tell you or not. It's entirely up to you."

Grant had stopped and kept looking from one to the other of us like some big St. Bernard dog. But she seemed to get ten years older all in a few seconds, and then she came over to me and leaned close, and spoke in a terrible whisper: "Carrie, tell me, what do you know about that stock? Yes, I've treated you very badly, but only because Grant means so much to me. Now let's be friends. The stock, Carrie—*what do you know about it?*"

"You may serve my breakfast, Agnes."

". . . Yes. Anything. Anything!"

"Yes *what,* Agnes?"

"Yes, Mrs. Harris."

Eighteen

The picture of that next few minutes will remain in my memory a great many years, I think. Of Grant staring at her as though he couldn't believe she would do such a thing. Of Mr. Hunt sitting on the sofa, fingering his moustache, his eyes shining, the color creeping up in his cheeks until his whole face was crimson. Of Mrs. Harris, like the middle-aged woman that she really was, her hands shaking so badly she couldn't break the eggs, and almost spilling the orange juice over me in her agitation. And of myself, sitting there munching ice cold toast, which was all I could get down, drinking my revenge and yet trying to appear calm and cool.

* * *

She was just pouring the coffee when Grant leaped at her. He grabbed her with one hand, her coat with the other, and began hustling her out of the door. "Get out of here!" he kept whispering at her, but in a rasping way, as though he could hardly restrain his fury. "Get out of here! Get out of here!" He opened the door, and kept jerking her along even when they were out in the hall.

Then Mr. Hunt jumped up. "All right, baby, you've done it. You've harpooned her, up to the hilt. Now that stock! Give it to me quick. Remember, I'm aboard that deal, too."

"Cover."

He hardly waited for me to finish before he dashed out. I got up to put the coffee cup back on the tray. When I turned around Grant was standing there, still panting. He closed the door and started over to me, his eyes dancing in an almost inhuman way. I backed away from him, but he grabbed me. "Carrie! . . . You've done it! You've set me free!"

He began kissing me then, but I was still so surprised I didn't give any response, and then he threw himself on the sofa and began pounding on the cushions with his fists. "Don't you suppose I knew what she was—what she did to us, and all the rest of it? Don't you think I hated myself, that I let her use me, make a fool out of me, torture me! Of course she broke up our marriage, and I knew she was doing it, and knew how she was doing it and why *but her will was stronger than mine!* I couldn't go up against her nobody can. You've no idea what she's like. And I was doing all sorts of things to break loose -starting unions, trying to break the System—"

"Marrying me."

"Yes!—and I did something that time. *You* went up against her and you made her knuckle. I could have jumped up and yelled, like some kid at a football game. It broke something. I could feel it snap. I was free! Think of that—she's gone and gambled my money in some stupid stock deal -and I don't care! *I don't care!*"

He came over and looked at me. Then he touched me, the reverent way you touch something to make sure it's there. "I know now what you meant," he said, still in a kind of trance, "what you meant that night. That night when I asked you to marry me, and you said I didn't say anything about love. I didn't know what love meant. No, I never loved you. Not then. Not until now when I saw you fasten your will on her and make her bend to it. Oh, yes now it's different. Now everything's different."

He disappeared into the bedroom for a minute or two, then he came out and laughed. For the first time since we had been married, almost, he was the old Grant, the one I remembered from the first walk we took together, when we had hooked little fingers together and the cop had told us not to mind him. "Sorry, Carrie. I've—I've been through hell, and I'm a little off my nut."

* * *

I desperately wanted to run into his arms and make up, but I didn't. I got up and wheeled the breakfast tray out into the hall, and when I came back I said: "Well, it's all very well for you to turn around and say you're sorry, or whatever it is that you mean—but I'm afraid I can't forget quite that easily."

He nodded, very seriously. "I know. I've got some ground to win back. Don't worry, I'll do it. I told Bernie out in the hall just now he could cross me off his damned payroll and from now on I start."

"Start what, may I ask?"

"My Indians."

"How? I think you said such researches cost money."

"I'll find it, don't you fear. And there's other things I'll do, too. For instance, that guy Holden I'll get him, I'll make him like me before I get done. There's a guy. But the first thing—I'm starting my life work. It's the kind of life work that doesn't show a profit, but never mind that. It's worth doing. Well—so it takes money. Well - then I'll get it. All right, I'm off. I didn't expect you to take me in your arms But you'll be hearing from me—soon."

I didn't want him to go. I wanted him to stay, so I could quarrel with him until I was ready to make up. So when he picked up his hat, I jumped up. "Well if you're looking for money, I think I can give you a name."

I went to the mantel where the envelope with the money in it was lying, having been entirely forgotten during the rather hasty exit taken by his mother. It had my named typed on it, and I handed it to him. ". . . What's this?"

"A name. I think she'll be good for anything you need."

He opened it, and when he saw what was inside he caught his breath. "Oh—the tip."

"Yes, but it's really yours. She's cheated you out of it."

I lay down on the sofa and he came and put the envelope on the table in front of me. "I didn't quite get you

at first. No, it's yours. I can't take money off you, Carrie."

"Do you mean it about the Indians, or not?"

"Of course. But—"

"Then you take things any way you can get them." Then I added: "That's what *I* always do," and raised my foot in a very provocative way and began to wave it around in the air. So the next second I was in his arms, and there had never been any quarrel, or any Lula, or any mother, only him and me. So I spent the week-end in sin, and it was Sunday afternoon before I remembered I was supposed to spend it at Mrs. Jerome's, and we laughed and laughed because now I was a social celebrity, but had forgotten to show up.

* * *

I return now to our sloop, which isn't anchored off the Bay Islands any more, but off Puerto Cortez, where our equipment is due tonight on a freighter, and tomorrow we start into the interior, for excavations and I don't know what-all. We spent two weeks in sin, as a matter of fact, at Atlantic City and a lot of places, for it took all sorts of red tape before Grant could get a license in New York. He had to prove the divorce was not granted against him on the ground of infidelity, or something. He kept his promise about Mr. Holden, and we all became good friends, and I don't think Mr. Holden felt hurt any more. We spent some time getting ready for the expedition, and it took a lot of my money, but I don't care. Tomorrow, Grant says, we start a perfectly hellish life, with mosquitoes, snakes, heat and everything else to bother us, and I guess it will be hard. But tonight there will be the Caribbean moon, and as it dances across the water, I shall think of the Modern Cinderella, and pretend that the light on the waves is really the silver slipper falling into her lap.

THE END

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James M(allahan) Cain (1892-1977) was an American author of hard-boiled crime novels, all told exclusively from the criminal's point of view. He was born in Annapolis, Maryland, and received a B.A. in 1910 (at age 18) and an M.A. in 1917 from Washington College in Chesterton, Maryland, where his father was president. Then he worked as a reporter with time out for a two-year term in the Army in World War I. His magazine articles and stories began to appear in the 1920s, and he became a bestselling author with the publication of his first and most famous novel, **The Postman Always Rings Twice** (1934). He had started to work on screenplays in Hollywood in 1931 and continued to write them for 17 years. Cain's tough, unsparing, lucid, and perceptive prose is held in the highest esteem by such contemporary writers as Tom Wolfe and Pete Hamill. He stands side by side with Ernest Hemingway, Dashiell Hammett, and Raymond Chandler as a headliner in the hard-boiled school of naturalistic writing. Three of his novels were made into hugely successful films: **The Postman Always Rings Twice, Double Indemnity** (1943), and **Mildred Pierce** (1941).

Harlan Ellison is the most honored writer in the field of imaginative literature. He has also won the Edgar Allen Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for his short story, "The Whimper of Whipped Dogs."

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